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iPhone +iPad Life

Best Apps • Top Tips • Great Gear

IPHONELIFE.COM
SPRING 2016 VOL. 8, NO. 1

BEST APPS 2016



Our 200+ Favorite Apps

Carrier Wars: Are You Wasting Money?
A Breakdown of the Best Coverage, Data Plans, and Upgrade Options PG 26

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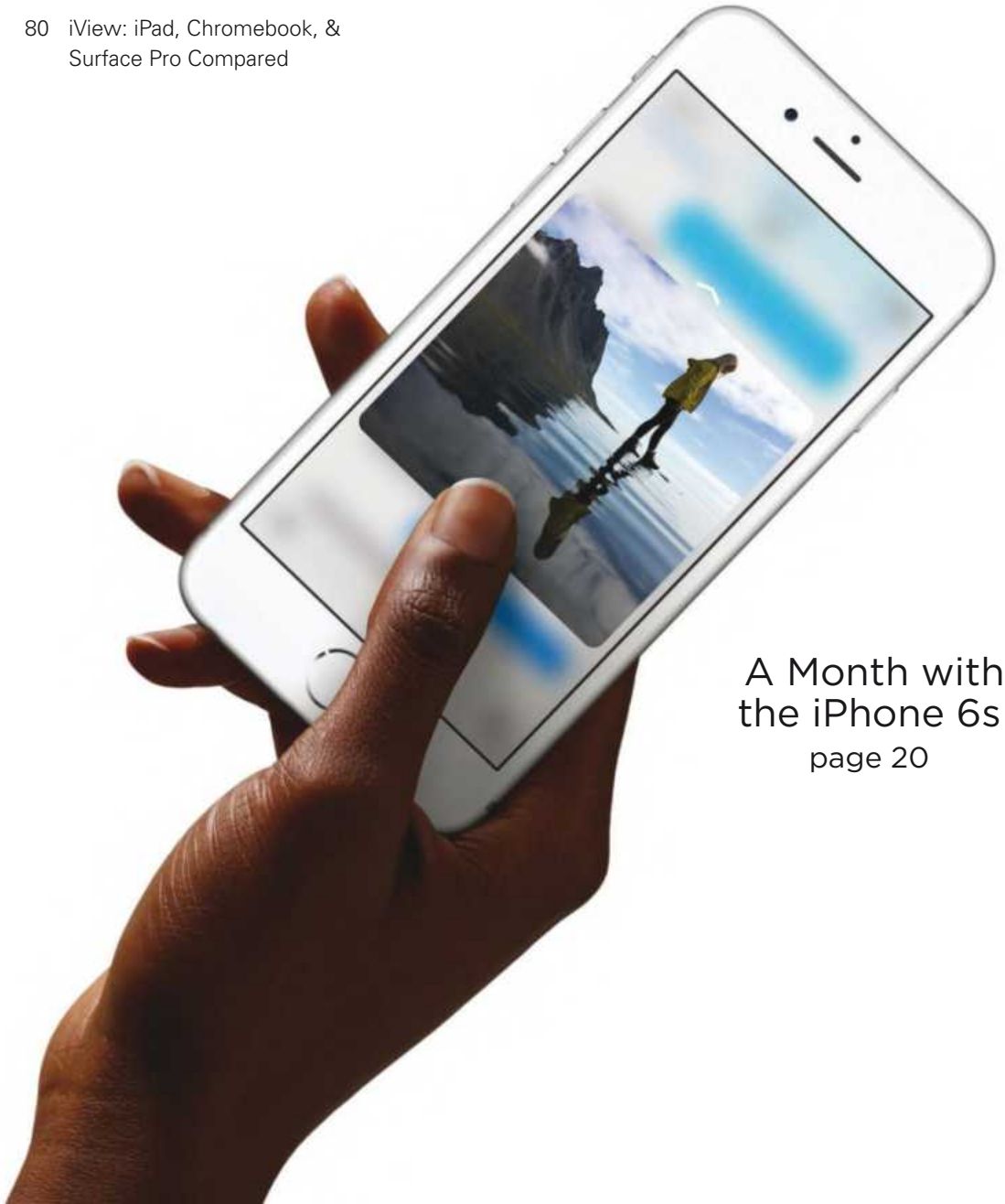
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Editor's Message

Steve Jobs and the Legacy of the App Store

It's been just over seven years since Steve Jobs announced the App Store, and yet it's hard to imagine our lives without it. Apple officially launched the app marketplace on July 10, 2008, offering 552 apps in all. Within three days, the store had caught on, garnering more than 10 million downloads.

The App Store is undoubtedly one of Apple's most important inventions. Apps have revolutionized the way we do so many things—look no further than Uber, Tinder, or Spotify for proof. And while Steve Jobs didn't invent mobile apps, he did successfully popularize them.

The iPhone and iPad are often credited as Jobs's greatest legacies, yet the App Store is a huge part of why they have such a loyal user base in the first place. Neglecting apps' potential was ultimately the nail in the coffin for other companies, such as Palm with its webOS, an otherwise great operating system that included multitasking long before the iPhone had it. I bought a Palm Pixi when it came out in 2009, and while I loved its compact physical keyboard and user-friendly OS, I became painfully aware of its meager supply of apps as the iPhone's reservoir of apps grew by the thousands. By the time Palm got it together to offer a developer's kit for creating native apps, I, like many others, had made the switch to Apple, and have never looked back.

With the App Store, Apple created a vibrant marketplace for creating and selling apps, and as developers strove to compete, they stretched the capabilities of our iPhones by pushing the devices' functional limits. Take the camera, for instance. Third-party app developers came up with apps that used the camera in new and brilliant ways—using the flash as a flashlight or as a way to measure heart rate, or using the camera itself to register credit cards and scan documents.

Today, there are more than 1.5 million apps in the App Store. The gold rush for developers in the early days of the App Store has passed, and discoverability has become a challenge. But this crowded app landscape is what makes creating our annual Best Apps issue so much fun. Within these pages, we delve into apps in more than a dozen categories, unearthing the hidden gems as well as touting the most popular picks, the perennial favorites. Apps are what make the iOS experience so interesting, and our aim is to help you experience the best of what the App Store has to offer.

Happy downloading!

Donna Cleveland

Donna Cleveland
Editor in Chief
iPhone Life magazine, donna@iphonelife.com, @schillcleveland



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STAFF PICKS

IPHONE LIFE EDITORS SHARE THEIR GO-TO GEAR & GADGETS



Name: Rheanne Schlee
Title: Associate Editor
Years at iPhone Life: 1.5
Apple Products Owned: iPhone 6s, Apple Watch Sport
Office Quirk: My coworkers hear a lot about my cat Wesley. I even created a personal Instagram account for him (@wesley_the_pirate_cat) and now he has more fans than I could ever dream of having.



Olloclip 4-in-1 Lens ($79.99)
This is my favorite product of all. Although I rarely use the Fisheye and Wide-Angle lenses, I constantly use the Macro lens set (then again, I have a penchant for tiny details). You have to make sure you keep these lenses clean, though! My image quality suffers a lot when I don't.



Eyefi Mobi SD Card (Starting at $29.99)
I love taking pictures with my DSLR; however, I stopped for a while because it wasn't worth the hassle of transferring my images to my computer and then to my phone. This little device changed all that. It connects to my iPhone via built-in Wi-Fi, so I can transfer my DSLR images directly to my phone for easy Instagram sharing. It's now a staple in my camera bag.



Keyway Atlas Case (Starting at $39.99)
I fell in love with the unique wooden design of this case by Keyway the first time I saw it, but I was unsure if it was rugged enough to protect my iPhone from my clumsiness. More than a year and countless drops later (onto concrete, asphalt, you name it), I'm happy to report that while the case itself boasts a few chips and cracks, my iPhone doesn't.



Otis & Eleanor Bongo Speaker ($140)
I'm super picky when it comes to choosing a Bluetooth speaker. If it isn't attractive, then I'm not interested, no matter how great it sounds. This particular speaker combines the best of both worlds: It sounds great for its size, and its all-natural bamboo shell and hemp speakers make it a stylish addition to my bookshelf.

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TRENDING

THE NUMBERS

59 PERCENT

According to a new study by Intel and Lineage Labs, more than half of Americans are snap-happy, taking at least one photo a day using their phones.

1.55 BILLION

Facebook touts 1.55 billion monthly active users as of last September, 1.39 billion of which regularly access the social media site through a mobile device.

35 PERCENT

According to a 2015 report from the Entertainment Software Association, 35 percent of frequent gamers use smartphones as their interface of choice.

WHAT'S HOT IN THE APP STORE



DSCO
(Free)
GIFS are all the rage these days—and now the makers of popular photo-editing app VSCO have released an app that lets you create your very own GIF animations and share them directly to your VSCO and social media accounts. Make clips up to 2.5 seconds long, and apply popular VSCO filters by swiping right or left. Upon saving, the app will save both the GIF and MP4 video to your phone.



Running by Gyroscope
(Free)
If you're a runner, then you should consider downloading this app by Gyroscope. When paired with either **Strava** (free) or **Runkeeper** (free), this app imports your stats to create gorgeous visualizations of your runs, consisting of things like satellite images, your photos, or even fun stats like how many doughnuts you burned on your five-mile run. You can then share your accomplishment with friends or simply save it for your records.



Great Big Story
(Free)
This app aims to educate the world, one intriguing story at a time. Sponsored by CNN, Great Big Story offers a daily selection of stories in the form of bite-sized videos that touch on everything—from historical tidbits about the creation of nachos to featured profiles on nostalgic figures like Lisa Frank. The app certainly strays from standard journalism, but that's kind of what makes it so awesome.

UNIQUE PRODUCT



ROAR for Good Athena ($100)
According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), there are an average of 293,000 victims of sexual assault per year. Indiegogo startup Roar for Good aspires to reduce that number with its successfully funded product, Athena. This round, quarter-sized device emits a piercing alarm when pressed and texts your current location to select friends and family. Athena is expected to ship May of 2016.





Marek Weidlich, YouTube

iPhone 7 Rumors: It Has Begun

bit.ly/20APMFy

When the iPhone 6s was released, Apple said "The only thing that's changed is everything." While that statement was a touch overdramatic, the forthcoming iPhone 7 could actually deliver on that promise. We hear whispers of a waterproof device with wireless charging, and if this concept design by Marek Weidlich has any bearing, we may even see an edge-to-edge screen sans Home button.



How to Track Your Mental Health with MoodNotes

bit.ly/1XV3Png

Mental health is commonly overlooked but incredibly important. MoodNotes aims to improve your overall mental health by providing a means for you to track your emotions. This review touches on all of the app's most valuable features, including logging your emotional state and adding notes about your feelings in a particular moment.



Apple TV - What Siri Can and Cannot Do

bit.ly/1Q9ehWD

The new Apple TV is out and gaining traction. Now that it is, you can start learning the ins and outs of one of the new Apple TV's most important features: Siri. Apple's virtual assistant allows you to launch apps, request information about the weather or stocks, and, most importantly, search shows and movies from popular streaming services like Netflix and HBO.

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Siva Om (pages 61, 66)
Rheanne Schlee (pages 6, 49, 50, 56, 58)
Anna Sica (page 78)

CAPTION CONTEST



Illustration by Mikaila Maidment, mikailamaidment.com

YOUR CAPTION HERE

Send us a clever caption for the cartoon above, and we'll feature our favorite entries in the next issue. The winner will receive $25! Send all captions to comics@iphonelife.com.



SPRING 2016 CAPTION WINNER

"Who needs Santa when you have Uber-claus?"
Submitted by Jesse Narducci

RUNNERS-UP:

"Hold on guys, Rudolph is texting me."
Submitted by Rosie Novellino-Mearns

"Sure, three elves died in the manufacturing process, but look at how beautiful it is!"
Submitted by Alex Cequea

Thanks to everyone who sent in their funny captions!

AROUND THE IPHONE LIFE OFFICE

What is your favorite app right now?



Marge, Ad Sales Coordinator: I'm a puzzle and trivia game junkie, so naturally I was excited to try **World of Wizmatch** (free). This great match-three game offers dozens of modes and hundreds of levels, so I'm sure it will keep me busy for quite some time.



Raph, CTO: Last Christmas I received a Kindle, and I've been enjoying collecting books on my **Kindle** app (free). I love that the app lets me switch seamlessly from iPhone to Kindle, keeping track of my progress so I can pick up on the exact page where I left off.



Conner, Feature Web Writer: What's more motivating than running from Zombies? **Zombies, Run!** (free) is my latest anti-lazy app; I love the way it combines exercise with gaming. The next time someone asks me if I'd survive a zombie apocalypse, I'll laugh and say it's my workout routine.



Rheanne, Associate Editor: I love sending random care packages of goodies to friends and family, but lately I just don't have the time to put them together myself. **Sesame Gifts** (free) makes it easy to send themed gift boxes to the people I care about, like the gourmet s'mores kit I just sent to my best friend.

OVERHEARD

WHAT WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT

iPhone Therapy

"It's OK, I'm just going to hold down the power button until everything gets better." -David, CEO

Instagram Problems

"Sadly, my cat [@wesley_the_pirate_cat] is more popular than I could ever hope to be."
-Rheanne, Associate Editor

Office Decisions

"Logic always makes things so difficult." – Noah, COO

Defending his GIF Habit

"Emojis are so 2014." -David

Life of a Web Master

"Would you like a unicorn pony too?" –Raph, CTO

Recovering from the Flu

"Physically I'm present, but I don't know if I'm actually here." –Sarah, Senior Web Editor

Heard Around the Conference Table

"Who am I playing footsie with?" -Sarah

Layering Choices

"Today I'm rocking socks with sandals and no one can make me not do that." –Donna, Editor in Chief

Workout Requirements

"If I don't listen to really angry hip-hop, I can't run." -David

Life Values

"If it's not chocolate, I'm not interested." -Donna

What's on iPhoneLife.com?

NEWS



FORMER GOOGLE CEO SLAMS APPLE MUSIC CURATORS

In a thinly veiled attack on Apple Music, Alphabet's executive chairman Eric Schmidt called the human curators behind streaming music services "elite taste-makers" who try to dictate music trends.



APPS



REVIEW: THE CAPTI NARRATOR APP READS YOUR SCREEN TO YOU

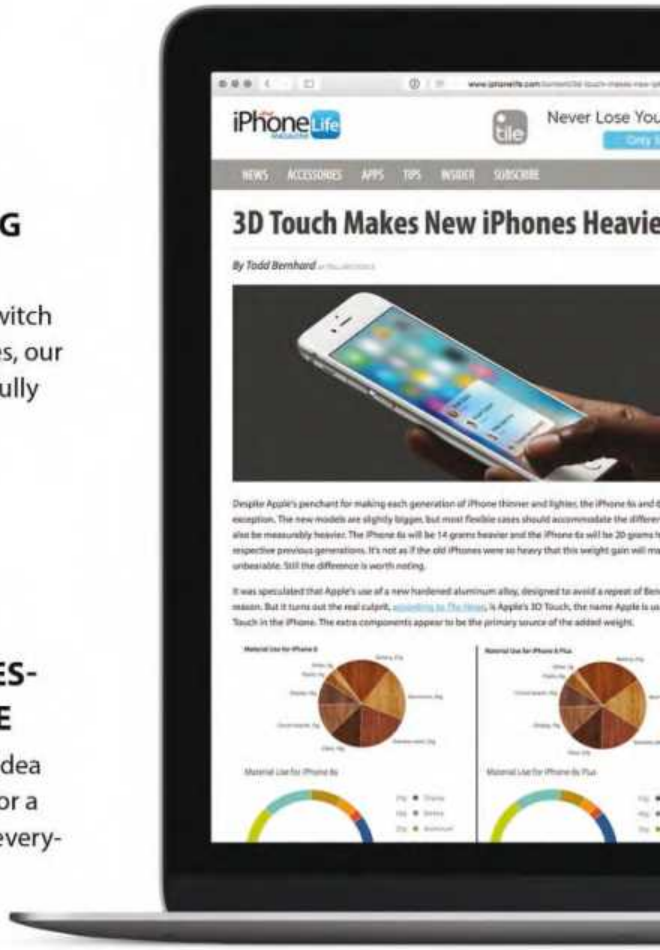
The Capti Narrator app reads your iPhone out loud, enabling a hands-free experience at the gym, in the car, or at the office. Sync your content across your devices, and seamlessly switch between them.

TIPS



DAILY TIPS & TRICKS FOR MASTERING IOS 9 ON YOUR IPHONE AND IPAD

From how to mute Siri using your iPhone's ring switch to how to use the iPad's new multitasking features, our daily tips are full of the information you need to fully utilize your iDevice's capabilities.



GEAR



OUTDOOR GEAR: TOP RUGGED ACCESSORIES FOR YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE

Space is limited when on the road, so it's a good idea to favor multi-functional gear that is well suited for a variety of conditions. In this roundup, you'll find everything you need for your next big adventure.

IPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY

Reader's Choice and 1st Place winners will receive the following prize:



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The olloclip 4-in-1 Lens for the iPhone and iPod touch includes fisheye, wide-angle, and macro lenses ($79.99 value, olloclip.com).

Photo Contest 1st Place



By Leva Rauluseviciute

2nd Place



By Christian De Bisschop

3rd Place



By James Fishman

CONTEST WINNERS



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Reader's Choice



By Iffath Khan

Want to see your photo featured here? Enter your best shots at iPhoneLife.com/contest for a chance to win. Our editors will choose the top three entries, and our readers will choose our fourth and final winner by voting for their favorite images on Facebook. Our Reader's Choice and 1st Place winner will receive the olloclip 4-in-1 Lens as well as a spot in an upcoming issue of *iPhone Life* magazine.

Photo Contest Finalists



By Kim Schaffer



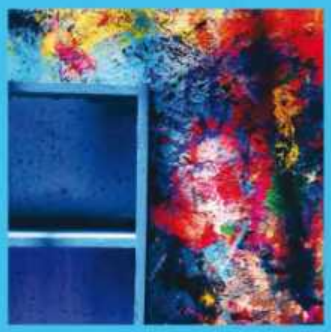
By Adam Hobden



By John See



By Karin MacDonald



By Megan Tan



By Candace Mills



By Ray Young



By Sheri Johnson

ASK AN EDITOR

QUESTIONS FROM IPHONE LIFE INSIDERS ANSWERED

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Join our iPhone Life Insider program at insider.iphonelife.com to gain access to in-depth guides, video tips, and our staff of editors, who can answer all your burning questions.

Why does "Hey Siri" work with my wife's iPhone 6s when it's unplugged but not with my iPhone 6?

Thanks,
Siri Never Listens

Hey, Never Listens!

With the iPhone 6s, "Hey Siri" no longer needs a constant source of power to function, unlike with older iPhone models. As a workaround, I'd recommend you get a battery case that keeps your iPhone 6 connected to power so you can use this featurewhen you're on the go, such as the **Anker Ultra Slim Extended Battery Case** ($99.99).

Can I create an event in my Calendar directly from a Mail invitation?

Sincerely,
Please Make My Life Easier

Hey, Easy!

Yeah, you can do that. Just press and hold on the underlined date or time and a pop-up will appear, giving you the option to create an event in your calendar. If you have the new calendar suggestions feature enabled in iOS 9, you will see the event suggestion at the top of your message. Tap it to add to your schedule. Easy, right?

How do I retrieve deleted text messages?

Thanks,
Whoops

Dear Whoops,

Sadly, there's no way to retrieve accidentally deleted texts from within the Messages app. But if you have a backup of your device from before you deleted those precious messages, you can prevent losing them permanently by restoring that backup to your iPhone via iTunes or iCloud.

To restore your text messages from an iCloud backup, you'll need to first erase your device (make sure you have a backup to restore to beforehand, though). To do this, go to Settings > General >Reset > Erase All Content and Settings. When you turn your device back on, the Setup Assistant will eventually ask you how you would like to set up your new iPhone. Tap Restore from iCloud Backup. Select a backup from before you deleted your texts, and then tap Restore.



Kenneth Boshell is a freelance writer who lives in Florida. His finely honed skills include finding great taco eateries, petting random cats, and hunting for the most delicious chocolate bar in the world. He has a ridiculously large pile of books to read, which he'd get to if he could just put down the *Black Company* and *Harry Potter* for a moment.





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Works for habits, weight and emotions. Also try our TracknShare app, featured by FastCompany.

FAVORITE PODCASTS

From iPhone Life Readers and Staff



On Point with Tom Ashbrook
"The daily news often leaves me craving more background information about the topics discussed. NPR's Tom Ashbrook provides that extra context as he speaks with experts about current events and answers listener questions, helping them to better understand the issues at hand."
-Donna Cleveland, Editor in Chief of *iPhone Life* magazine



Serial
"Serial is the most addictive podcast I've ever listened to! It's high-quality journalism meets murder mystery meets *This American Life*."
–David Averbach, CEO of *iPhone Life* magazine



Monocle Podcasts
"I love the diverse selection of Monocle's podcast. I especially enjoy *The Entrepreneurs* for inspiring start-up and branding stories, and *The Urbanist* for an in-depth look at the issues shaping our modern cities."
-Amy Van Beek, Co-founder of Ideal Energy



Radiolab
"Radiolab covers an incredible expanse of topics—usually with a scientific bent—while still managing to be engaging and accessible. I love that it introduces me to new ideas and novel ways to think about old ideas."
-Krystal Shaw, Realtor with Roots Real Estate Austin



Reply All
"Reply All is my guilty pleasure. While the podcast is technically 'about the Internet,' in reality it's a laugh-out-loud, cackling, thigh-slapping audio theme park. One of my favorite episodes involves a Kindle Fire and a man who gets into a fight with his one-legged houseguest for punching his wife."
-Eliana Freeman, Accountant



The Tim Ferriss Show
"Tim Ferriss is the great deconstructionist. He breaks everything from diet and exercise to work habits down into understandable pieces. In this podcast, I like that he tries to understand what makes various famous people successful in their professions."
-Jonathon Sinton, Business Director at Human Factors



Women of the Hour
This Buzzfeed original with Lena Dunham is kind of like the hit TV show *Girls*, minus the millennial drama. Instead, Dunham focuses on the experiences that bond women together, highlighting refreshingly honest stories that inspire both laughter and tears.
-Donna Cleveland



StartUp
"In StartUp's first season, NPR's Alex Blumberg tells the story of how he fulfilled his dream of creating his own podcast network. I love the raw yet somehow upbeat fear of failure that comes through as Blumberg puts everything on the line for something he believes in."
-Eliana Freeman



Listen to the iPhone Life Podcast

Are you a podcast fanatic? Do you like following iPhone news? Then check out our podcast at iphonelife.com/podcast.

HOT iPAD GAME



2PLAY TAP

This multi-player game for iPads is so much fun. It's really easy to learn. Each player taps circles of their color for points.
The real fun is sabotaging your opponent with Power-ups. My favorite is blasting them with Lightning. The big paint splats is also fun to blind them.
We can see why this game is starting to win awards. The developers designed it to bring back family game night.
We found it equally fun for office breaks. It is available for iPads only on the App Store.



Download on the App Store

http://bit.ly/2PlayTap

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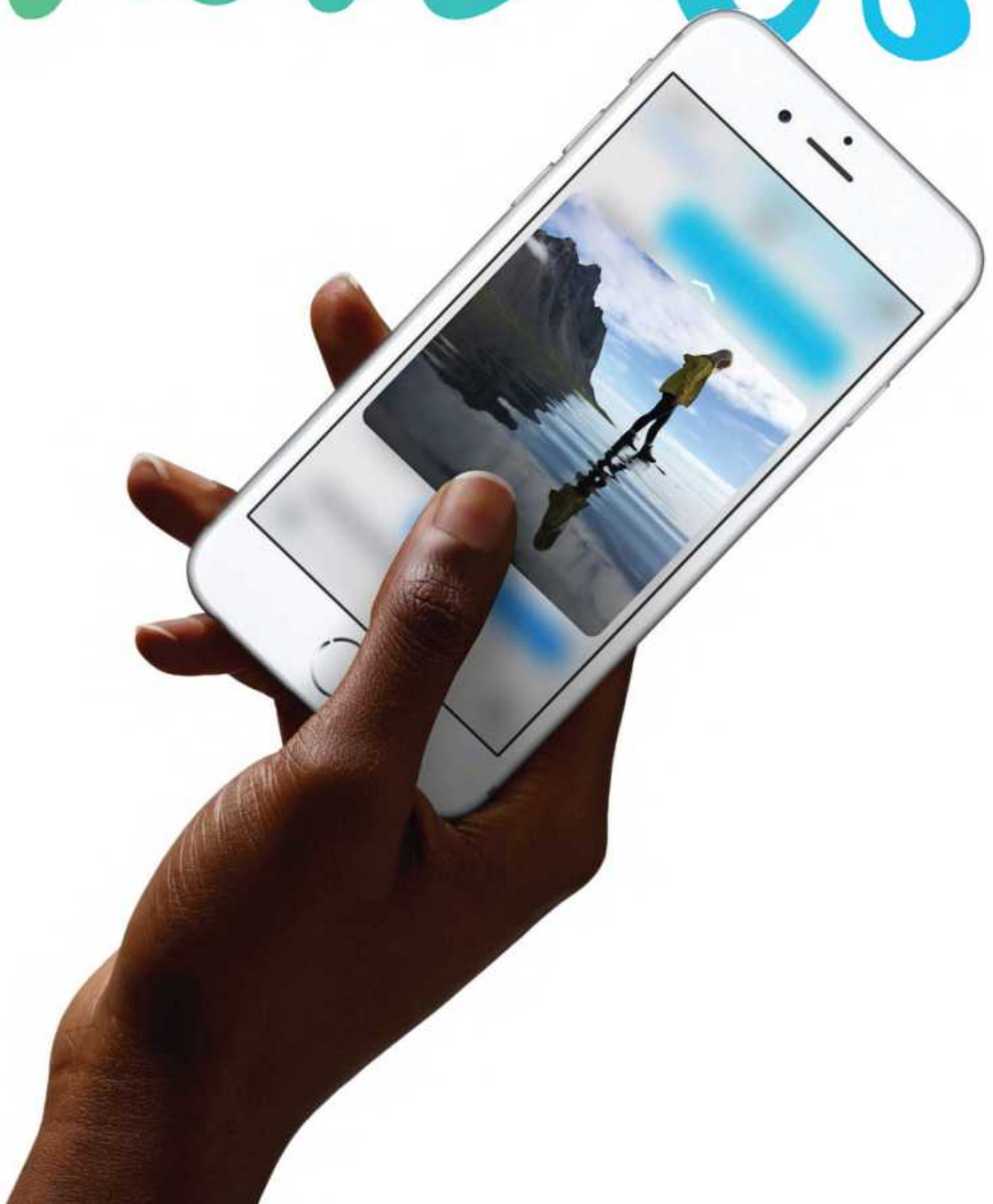
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A Month with the iPhone 6s



Hands On with Apple's Latest Flagship Device

by Donna Cleveland

Let's take a moment to appreciate how amazing it is that, today, we have access to incredibly powerful devices that are built to make our lives vastly more connected and productive. It's difficult for most of us to even comprehend the technology that goes into our iPhones, so it can feel a little ridiculous to nitpick the fine points of ways the devices could improve.

That being said, we spend a lot of money to have this privilege. Between the cost of a device and monthly service charges from carriers, Americans easily spend more than $1,000 per year on their phones, so it's good to be discerning about how to spend that hard-earned cash. In that spirit, here's my honest assessment of each new feature of the 6s, ordered from the most outstanding to the ones I could live without.

Overall, after spending more than a month with the iPhone 6s, I am convinced that it's the best smartphone I've ever had. It perfects the experience of the iPhone 6 and is a terrific upgrade for those with an older phone or for iPhone 6 owners whose carriers are offering good deals on yearly upgrades.

When compared to the iPhone 6, however, the iPhone 6s is more of an incremental upgrade than Apple would have you believe, adding new levels of polish to an already excellent device. In keeping with Apple's usual product release schedule, which alternates each year between form-factor upgrades and internal hardware "s" upgrades, I expect we'll see more noticeable outward features with the iPhone 7 release next year.

With the 6s, Touch ID has gone from a promising yet faulty technology to a truly useful feature that makes users' lives easier.

Touch ID Is a Game Changer

With the 6s, Touch ID has gone from a promising yet faulty technology to a truly useful feature that makes users' lives easier. With the 6, Touch ID was just slow enough that it ended up being a nuisance. I experienced enough failed attempts that I found it faster to enter my passcode than use the fingerprint scanner.

But thanks to the improved fingerprint sensor in the 6s, now my phone unlocks immediately when I place my finger on the Home button. While I didn't purchase the 6s with improved Touch ID in mind, it has quickly become my favorite improvement.

3D Touch Grows on You



It took me longer than I anticipated to get used to 3D Touch, a feature that reveals extra controls when you press harder on the screen. Apple built its marketing campaign for the 6s around 3D Touch, using the slogan, "The only thing that's changed is everything."

While that claim was a bit of a stretch, considering it's easy to use the phone without ever noticing 3D Touch, I do appreciate having a device that is built to make the most of iOS 9, Apple's latest mobile platform. Once I saw what 3D Touch could do, I felt I would've been missing out had I not upgraded from the iPhone 6, even though the device looked physically identical. As Apple's director of design Jony Ive put it in a promo video for the 6s, "Hardware and software developed together can work to define a singular experience."

There are a number of smart ways iOS 9 incorporates 3D Touch into the user experience that makes accomplishing tasks more efficient. Quick Actions are similar to right clicking on your computer, summoning a menu of options when you press hard on an app icon. Another 3D Touch feature called Peek and Pop lets you press on links for a preview of the content and press more firmly to visit the linked page or app.

I'm most fond of using 3D Touch to peek at my schedule from Calendar event invites or to view a location in Maps. I don't, on the other hand, find peeking at websites that useful. I don't find it inconvenient to actually visit a website to look at an article, and I usually need to see more than a paragraph to decide if it's content that I want to read.

You have to be willing to spend a little time getting used to 3D Touch. A good example of this for me was with the trackpad iOS 9 feature. You can press firmly on your keyboard to grey it out and then slide your finger to move the cursor or highlight text. Once you get the hang of this, it's a huge time saver, but at first it feels awkward and is hard to get to respond the way you want.

Hey, Siri!

I'm happy Apple decided to add voice activation to the 6s without requiring it to be plugged in. Having that restriction with the iPhone 6 meant I'd just forget about the feature altogether. There are many scenarios in which I find myself needing voiceless control, such as in the kitchen, where my hands are often occupied; when driving the car; and when getting ready for bed. It works really well, perhaps partially due to the new setup assistant in iOS 9 that has you train Siri in voice recognition. Siri reads what you've said and gives you the option to modify your message, all without touching your phone.

My only complaint is that it is still easy to trigger the Hey Siri feature accidentally when you say something even slightly similar, such as "seriously." It's a creepy feeling when Siri chimes in when you're having a private chat with a friend. But I'd say that's a downside I can live with.

Faster Processor and LTE

When I first got my 6s, I compared how fast apps loaded on it next to the iPhone 6. While both were very fast, the A9 chip in the 6s loaded apps noticeably faster than the A8 did. It may not be a huge selling point, but every little bit helps. The 6s also has faster access to data networks and Wi-Fi, which I noticed has made me more likely to browsw Safari on my phone.

Reportedly, men came out in hordes after the 6s release to buy Rose Gold phones, now dubbed Bros' Gold.

Rose Gold Color Option



Apple's added a fourth color option to its usual lineup of Space Gray, Gold, and Silver with the new Rose Gold iPhone 6s. While I'm personally a fan of this new hue, I feel it's important to acknowledge that its name is deceiving—the phone is pink. *Forbes* writer Ree Hines was spot-on when she said its close relatives are Hello Kitty pink and a nail polish called Frosted Fairycakes. Perhaps ignoring its apparent pinkness was clever marketing on Apple's part, helping men to deem it socially acceptable to embrace a pink phone. If that was Apple's aim, it seems to have worked. Reportedly, men came out in hordes after the 6s release to buy Rose Gold phones, now dubbed Bros' Gold. Go figure!

Camera



To my unsophisticated eye, photos from the 12-megapixel iPhone 6s camera look pretty much the same as those from the iPhone 6. However, I like that the 6s can produce higher-quality images if I choose to print them. The self-facing flash is a nice addition too, but it gives off a slightly orange hue.

Construction

While the 6s looks virtually identical to the 6, it has a tiny bit of extra heft, thanks to the addition of 3D Touch. Its screen is also made of sturdier glass, which I'm grateful for, considering I shattered my last screen after dropping it from less than 4 feet. For those upgrading from the 5 or 5s, the 4.7-inch screen will be the most noticeable change to your experience by far. There may be an adjustment period, but trust me, you'll find yourself loving the bigger screen over time.

Live Photos

Another iOS 9 feature that's optimized for the 6s is Live Photos, which records video 1.5 seconds before and after you take a photo. While it may seem futuristic to have photos that "come to life" when you press on them, I've found Live Photos to be a pointless way to use up more storage. I'm of the opinion that if you want a video, you should record a video. And if you want a short video snippet, apps like **DSCO** (free) make it easy to create your own GIFs.

Conclusion

The improvements to the 6s make the user experience smoother overall, but they're not revolutionary. For more groundbreaking features like wireless charging or an edge-to-edge display, we'll have to wait until next year's release to see what Apple has in store for us.



Donna Schill Cleveland is the Editor in Chief of *iPhone Life* magazine. After a short stint as a newspaper reporter, she became web editor at *iPhone Life*, where she continues to pair her penchant for storytelling with her love of Apple products. Donna holds a master's degree from the University of Iowa School of Journalism & Mass Communication.



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WHICH



CARRIER



SHOULD



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A BREAKDOWN OF THE BEST COVERAGE, DATA PLANS, & UPGRADE OPTIONS

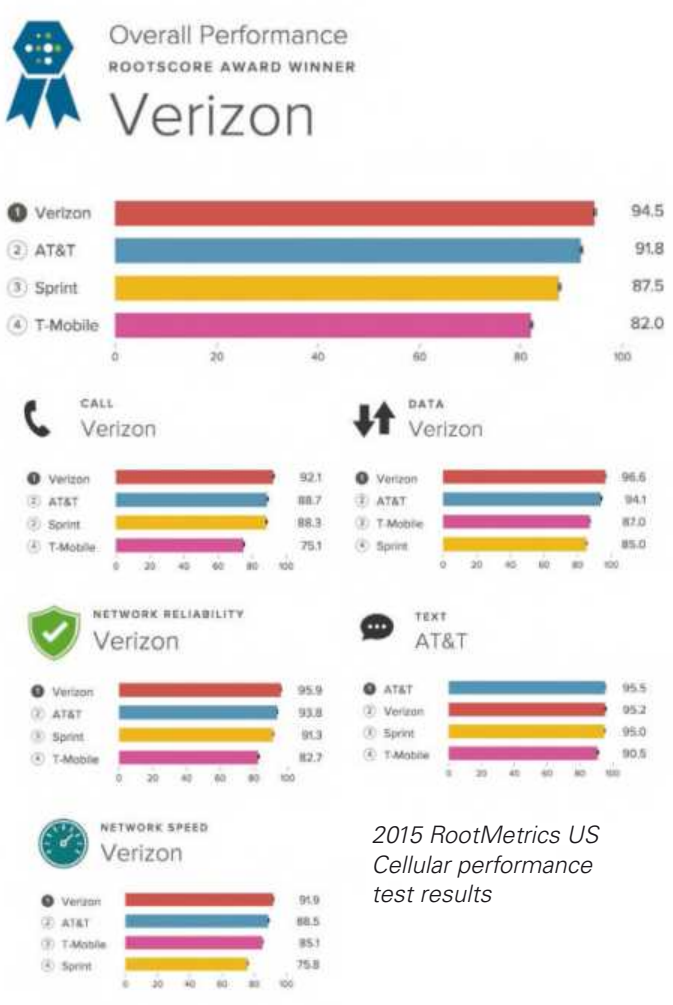
BY DAVID AVERBACH

When Apple released the original iPhone in 2008, US consumers could only get it through one carrier—AT&T. You may have barely been able to make a phone call or browse the web, but at least you didn't have to make a lot of choices. Today, there are 40 carriers in the United States alone that support the iPhone. While the competition has led to better prices and customer service, it does make buying an iPhone more complicated. This guide will answer all your burning questions and walk you through everything you need to know to pick the right mobile carrier, including iPhone leasing options, coverage area, and data plans.

Which Carrier Has the Best Coverage?

The most important factor to consider when choosing a carrier is coverage. There is nothing more frustrating than getting a brand new phone only to realize that you can't reliably make calls or browse the web in the city you live in.

Fortunately for us, RootMetrics, an independent organization that measures cellular performance in the United States, has done the grunt work to evaluate carriers. In the first half of 2015, RootMetrics staff drove over 237,506 miles and performed over 6 million tests to assess carrier performance. Below are their findings:



2015 RootMetrics US Cellular performance test results

> Essentially, carriers have uncoupled the purchase of an iPhone from the service plan.

The Verdict: Verizon has the best coverage in virtually every metric, followed by AT&T. Sprint and T-Mobile have improved their coverage, but are still lagging behind the frontrunners. In general, you should avoid Sprint and T-Mobile if you live in a rural area. Coverage varies a lot, so make sure you ask your friends and neighbors about the carriers they use before making your decision.

Do I Still Need to Sign a Two-Year Contract?

Traditionally, mobile carriers have charged $199 upfront for a base-level iPhone (which retails for $649), and have made all their money by locking you in to a two-year contract with expensive monthly service plans. However, every major carrier has now phased out this model and no longer requires two-year contracts. While the transition has been confusing for many people, it's actually a positive change for consumers. Rather than subsidizing the iPhone, carriers are now financing it. Pending a credit check, consumers can avoid upfront fees and pay off the cost of their phones in monthly installments. Essentially, carriers have uncoupled the purchase of an iPhone from the service plan. The overall monthly cost remains about the same, but you're not required to keep the same phone or carrier for two years, making upgrading annually a lot cheaper.

The Verdict: Two-year contracts are a thing of the past, and that's a good thing!

How Much Monthly Data Do I Need?

Cellular data is what your phone uses to connect to the Internet when you are not using Wi-Fi. All of the major carriers' plans now include unlimited talk and text and charge you based on how much cellular data you use each month. The activities that consume the most data by far are video streaming with apps such as Netflix and YouTube and music streaming with services like Apple Music and Spotify. Another hidden data hog is photo and video sharing via iMessage. According to mobile analytics firm Mobidia, the average US smartphone owner uses 1.8 GB of data per month. You can find out your own average monthly data consumption by calling your carrier, checking your online account, or downloading a data-tracking app from the App Store.

The Verdict: Most carriers charge high overage fees if you go over your monthly data allotment, so in general it's better to err on the side of signing up for too much data rather than too little. I highly recommend avoiding monthly plans with 1 GB of data

or fewer. Unless you use cellular data to stream a lot of content to your phone, you can probably make do with a 2–3 GB plan.

Should I Buy My iPhone or Lease It?

In addition to announcing the iPhone 6s last September, Apple also launched the iPhone Upgrade Program, which lets you lease new iPhones with AppleCare+ extended warranty coverage directly from Apple. Customers pay Apple a fixed fee each month for the iPhone ($32.41 for the 16 GB iPhone 6s, $36.58 for the 64 GB, and $40.75 for the 128 GB). Once a year, you can trade in your old iPhone for the latest model. On the surface, this sounds like a great deal. All you have to do is pay Apple $32 per month, and you get a new iPhone every year for the rest of your life. All of the major carriers have followed suit, offering similar leasing plans.

> With the carrier's new smartphone plans, you are no longer locked into two-year contracts, making it easier and cheaper to upgrade your phone every year.

If you factor in the $129 value of AppleCare+, the iPhone Upgrade Program ends up being an interest-free plan for financing your phone. But if you aren't planning on buying insurance, leasing doesn't end up being a very good deal. What most people fail to consider is that the year-old iPhones they're handing back to Apple are still worth quite a bit of money. It's kind of like renting a house rather than buying one—it's easy in the short run, but your money isn't going toward equity.

In the chart below, I examined the true cost of purchasing versus leasing an iPhone. In order to estimate these costs, I had to make several assumptions. First of all, I am assuming that you are buying a new 64 GB iPhone each year (don't fall for the 16 GB base model, you'll regret it). Secondly, I am assuming that you are reselling your year-old iPhone on eBay. According to eBay, the average price of an iPhone 6 sold on its site is around $500. Finally, I am assuming you are selling the phone yourself on eBay and paying the site's 10 percent listing fee and PayPal's 3 percent processing fee.

iPhone 6s Purchasing Options (64 GB)

	Leasing	Buying
Annual Cost	$439	$749
Average Resale Value (After Fees)	N/A	$435
Net Cost of Phone	$439	$314

As you can see in this chart, the annual cost of leasing an iPhone is $439 per year and the final cost of buying a new iPhone each year (and then reselling your old one) is $314 per year. This means that buying a new phone and reselling your old one will save you $125 per year. If you decide to upgrade your iPhone every two years, the savings are even more significant.

Verdict: Some people may be willing to pay an extra $125 per year for the convenience of leasing and for the AppleCare+ coverage, but for most people, it's better to just buy the iPhone outright.

Should I Upgrade My iPhone Every Year or Every Two Years?

With the carrier's new smartphone plans, you are no longer locked into two-year contracts, making it easier and cheaper to upgrade your phone every year. But even with the new pricing, is it worth it to upgrade each year?

The chart below analyzes the difference between buying an iPhone every year versus buying one every two years. In the projections below, I am assuming that you are buying a new 64 GB iPhone each time and that you are reselling your old iPhone on eBay.

Cost of Upgrading Based on Frequency of Purchase

	Every Year	Every 2 Years
64 GB iPhone 6s	$749	$749
Resale Value	$500	$300
Ebay & Paypal Fees	$65	$39
Real Cost of Phone	$314	$488
Cost Per Year	$314	$244

One of the hidden factors that most people don't look at is the depreciation rate of iPhones. According to eBay, the previous generation of iPhone is worth $500 whereas an iPhone that is two generations old is worth only $300. The end result is that if you buy an iPhone every year and sell your old device on eBay, the phone's net cost is $314, and if you buy an iPhone every two years the phone's net cost is $488. That being said, you are of course buying twice the number of iPhones. Buying a new iPhone every year will end up costing you $70 more per year than buying an iPhone every two years. However, if you were able to get the same price selling your old iPhone on Craigslist or in person (where you don't have to pay fees), it would only cost you $25 extra per year to purchase the newest iPhone every year.

The Verdict: While it really depends how much you care about owning the latest iPhone, for me, it's definitely worth paying an extra $70 to upgrade every year.

Which Carrier Is the Cheapest?

With all of the carriers changing their pricing models, keeping track of the latest offerings can be pretty confusing. Fortunately for you, I've spent many hours on the phone with all four major carriers' customer service lines in order to get to the bottom of their pricing.

Both plans assume that you are purchasing a 64 GB iPhone 6s. The first chart assumes that you're on a family plan with four lines that each require at least 2 GB of data. The second chart assumes that you are on an individual plan and that you require at least 2 GB of data. Rates below exclude the cost of a new iPhone but include monthly access charges. Note: I opted for Verizon and T-Mobile's 3 GB plans, as they don't offer 2 GB plans, so it's not an apples-to-apples comparison.

Family Plan (With 4 Lines)

	Verizon	AT&T	Sprint	T-Mobile
Data Per Month	12 GB	15 GB	10 GB	10 GB
Monthly Plan (Excluding iPhone)	$160	$160	$120	$100
Cost Per Line Per Month	$40	$40	$30	$25

Individual Plan

	Verizon	AT&T	Sprint	T-Mobile
Data Per Month	3 GB	2 GB	2 GB	3 GB
Monthly Plan (Excluding iPhone)	$65	$55	$50	$60

The Verdict: Family plans are cheaper than individual plans. Even if you don't have a family of your own, it may be worth splitting a plan with friends. Sprint is the cheapest carrier for either plan. Carriers are often aggressive with their promotions, so it's worth calling each carrier before making a final decision.

What's the Final Verdict?

I recommend purchasing a 64 GB iPhone each year with a plan that includes at least 2 GB of cellular data. When it comes to choosing a carrier, unfortunately you face a decision between the best coverage and the best price. If you live in a big city and don't travel much, Sprint is your best bet. Most people, though, should stick with AT&T or Verizon. If you live in a rural area, I would go with Verizon despite the cost.



David Averbach is the CEO and Publisher of *iPhone Life* magazine. David has an obsession with all things Apple. He grew up on Macs and now has a MacBook Pro, iPhone, iPad, Apple TV, and an Apple Watch. David enjoys traveling and Ultimate Frisbee. He has been to over 20 countries. To contact David, email him at David@iphonelife.com.

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FEATURED iUSER: Jeannette Balleza Collins



Age: 36
Location: Fayetteville, Arkansas
One-Line Bio: Jeanette is the cofounder of geneology site dead-fred.com and investment firm tonic.vc, as well as a consultant at hepphilanthropy.com. Her personal website is hellonetscribe.com.



Baby Nursing: This app lets me track my son's feedings, pumping sessions, measurements, vaccinations, and baths.

Print Studio: This app lets me print photos on things like magnets, buttons, individual prints, frames, and cards and order them as gifts using Social Print Studio's app-to-doorstep service.

Nest: I can use this app to adjust our smart-home thermostat and monitor our Nest Dropcam's live video of the nursery and living room remotely.

WATCH ABC: I keep up with all my favorite ABC shows like the entire 'Thank God It's Thursday' lineup, *Nashville*, and *Quantico*. So many leading ladies to admire!

HelloSign: When there are documents that need signatures on the go, I can review and sign paperwork with HelloSign.

Headspace: When I am stressed or need to tap in to the quiet spaciousness within my mind, I can count on Headspace for guided meditations to carve out some peace.

Hangouts: My childhood best friend is living in Vietnam, and Hangouts allows us to stay connected, face to face, despite the distance and time difference.

Slack: Slack is perfect for managing teams and communities of people for work, networking, and one-on-one communications without cumbersome email.

Bouqs: Sending flowers to friends and relatives who live far away is super easy with these cut-to-order flowers by Bouqs.

Periscope: When startup events or talks happen during my son's dinner or nighttime ritual, I can livestream or replay video from those happenings while away from my desk.



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- 32 GB and 128 GB storage options
- Offers cellular model
- Runs iOS 9
- 12.9-inch screen
- Retina display
- 4 GB of RAM
- Doesn't support 3D Touch
- 6.9mm Thin
- Weighs 1.57 pounds
- Lightning port
- 10-hour battery
- Supports Apple Pencil ($99)
- Supports Smart Keyboard ($169)
- 8 MP iSight camera
- Touch ID



Microsoft Surface Pro 4 (starting at $899)
- 128 GB, 256 GB, 512 GB, and 1 TB storage options
- Runs Windows 10 Pro
- 12.3-inch screen
- PixelSense display
- 4 GB, 8 GB, and 16 GB RAM options
- 8.5mm thin
- Weighs 1.69 pounds
- USB and microSD slots
- 9-hour battery
- Surface Pen included
- Adjustable kickstand
- 8 MP camera



MacBook (starting at $1,299)
- 256 GB and 512 GB storage options
- Runs OS X El Capitan
- 12-inch screen
- Retina display
- 8 GB of RAM
- Trackpad with Force Touch and haptic feedback
- 13.1mm thin
- Weighs 2 pounds
- Single USB-C port charges device and handles file transfer
- 9-hour battery

Apple announced its most powerful tablet yet in September with the iPad Pro. Touted by Apple as a tool for professionals, the Pro boasts a 13-inch screen, a processor that's faster than 80 percent of laptops, and an add-on keyboard and stylus that increase its versatility.

With all this in mind, CEO and Publisher David Averbach, Editor in Chief Donna Cleveland, and Senior Web Editor Sarah Kingsbury explore how well the Pro works in professional settings and how it compares to its top competitors—Apple's ultra-slim notebook called MacBook and Microsoft's latest tablet, the Surface Pro 4.

Does It Matter that the Pro Doesn't Support 3D Touch?

SARAH It's a bit like when the iPhone first got Touch ID and the iPad didn't, and everyone felt kind of disappointed. Don't you think it's going to be frustrating to have that ease on your new phone and then not be able to have that quick action on your iPad Pro?

DAVID Yes, if this is Apple's marquee product, they should have added all of their coolest, newest features to it.

DONNA I know, that really bothered me too, because it is such an intentional choice. They could have added that feature and they didn't for some reason. A big hesitation in leaving my laptop behind in favor of the Pro is that the Pro doesn't have a mouse, and 3D Touch would've made me feel better about that because it simulates being able to right click. It's just another reason to spring for the Apple Pencil though, which can detect how hard you're pressing and therefore offer similar capabilities.

Will the Apple Pencil and Smart Keyboard Make the Pro More Versatile than a Laptop?

SARAH I think the keyboard will be really handy. The iPad Pro is so large that it will be really difficult to use without some type of stand. I'm annoyed that it's optional though, because if you want to work on it, a functional keyboard is crucial.

DAVID I think they wanted to keep the base-level price down so they could say it starts at $799, even though, really, to get what you want (which is the 128 GB model, the keyboard, and the Pencil), you're looking at spending $1,200.

DONNA One thing I'm excited about with the keyboard is that it doesn't use Bluetooth technology. I've used a few wireless keyboards and there are times when you're typing and nothing shows up on your screen. There will probably be less frustration with this new technology.

DAVID I know that, historically, I've taken an anti-stylus position, but what did you guys think of the Pencil?

SARAH For certain cases where a stylus is called for, it will be really awesome. The Pro can detect what angle you're holding the Pencil at, without latency. You can draw thicker and thinner lines with the Pencil depending on how hard you press. But it only works with the iPad Pro; you can't use it as a stylus on another device. It's annoying to spend $100 on a stylus that I can only use on one of my devices.

DAVID The stylus bothers me in principle because it goes against the fabric of why Apple created a tablet in the first place.

"I'd recommend the iPad Pro to people who travel a lot and want that extra portability and are working in a field that doesn't require a lot of heavy lifting."

Will Professionals Use It?

DONNA As a writer and editor, the Pro would be able to do most of what I'm looking for. Now that we store so much information in the cloud, I could technically store everything I need there, and use the Microsoft Office suite for word processing. But it could be a real pain for people who really need all of the ports that an iPad doesn't have, like Ethernet and USB.

DAVID I struggle with the Pro for most professions. I believe that the processing power is enough, but the operating system is still challenging. I know Apple has added multitasking to iOS, but I multitask on such a different level on a computer than I do on a tablet or on a phone.

SARAH It's true—even with easy text selection, I don't think the touchscreen will be as quick, and I think it would get very annoying.

"As iOS becomes more advanced, and the walls between your laptop and your mobile device start coming down, at some point they will converge."

DAVID Professionals—especially artists, graphic designers, and video editors—require a lot of computer power, precision, and shortcuts (with Adobe, you're using a lot of hot keys and things like that). I can't imagine our graphic designer laying out our magazine on an iPad; that seems crazy to me.

Is the Pro Better than the Apple MacBook and Microsoft Surface Pro?

DONNA The MacBook does have more storage and more RAM than the Pro, so in some ways it's a better choice.

DAVID I'd recommend the iPad Pro instead of the MacBook to people who travel a lot and want that extra portability and are working in a field that doesn't require a lot of heavy lifting. For a lot of people, email and light web browsing is all they need. If I took it with me traveling, I think I could get away with just that. My main problem is the price. It's just not worth it, because it's the same price as a computer, but a computer has more versatility.

DONNA Another thing that could swing people in either direction is whether you prefer iOS over OS X. Generally, iOS apps are more user friendly but give you fewer options than the desktop versions. And so I think that's something that would be a personal choice. If there are certain apps that you'd really like to use on an iPad Pro that you could use professionally, that might be compelling to you.

DAVID That's exactly the reason I would prefer a laptop. When you're working, I think OS X is better. The Microsoft Surface Pro actually runs the same operating system with Windows 10 that Microsoft's desktop devices do. If you had a desktop operating system on the iPad, I'd be much more likely to use it. I hate to be the person to say Microsoft is right and that Apple is wrong, but I'm going to have to be that guy in this case.

Consensus

SARAH The iPad Pro is a first step. As iOS becomes more advanced, and the walls between your laptop and your mobile device start coming down, at some point they will converge (even though Tim Cook denies it at this point). We're not quite there, but you have to start somewhere.

DONNA I'll consider getting the Pro in a couple of years, and if I do, it will be my laptop replacement. I'm not ready to make that leap yet though.

DAVID Until Apple merges desktop and mobile operating systems, I'm skeptical that the iPad Pro will be sufficient for professionals.

This article is based on Episode 3 of the iPhone Life Podcast. For the full episode, go to iphonelife.com/podcast.

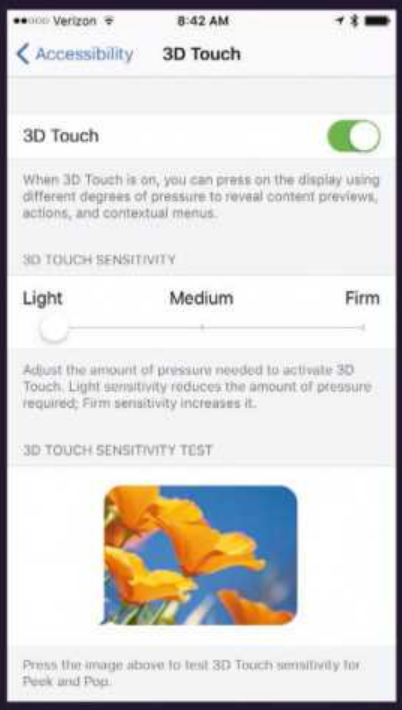


GETTING STARTED WITH 3D TOUCH

TOP 10 WAYS TO USE 3D TOUCH ON THE IPHONE 6S AND 6S PLUS

BY SARAH KINGSBURY

When using your new iPhone 6s or 6s Plus, it's not immediately obvious how and when to use the new 3D Touch feature, which reveals extra controls when you press harder on your phone's screen. Here are 10 tips for making the most out of this cool new way to interact with your phone, from peeking at emails or websites to quickly accessing app menus.



1 Adjust 3D Touch Sensitivity or Disable It Altogether

If you want to change the responsiveness of 3D Touch or turn it off completely, go to Settings > General > Accessibility > 3D Touch. Here you can disable 3D Touch or adjust the sensitivity levels to Light, Medium, or Firm. Light reduces the amount of pressure needed to make 3D Touch work. Firm increases it. Make sure you've got the setting right by using the sensitivity test provided.



2 Make More Nuanced Sketches in Notes

Apple gave its native Notes app a huge makeover in iOS 9, giving users the ability to do things like create folders and share websites and images to Notes. But those who updated to the iPhone 6s and 6s Plus got an added boost: the ability to create even better drawings. In the newly updated Notes app's sketch feature, lines will be darker or lighter depending on how firmly or lightly you press as you draw them.

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Peek at Web Pages without Actually Opening Them

Whether you encounter a link in an email, a text, or while browsing the web, firmly pressing on it lets you preview a web page in Safari without actually opening it. Lift your finger to return to what you were originally looking at. Swipe up without lifting your finger to bring up a menu of further actions such as copying the link or adding it to your Reading List. Press harder to open the page.



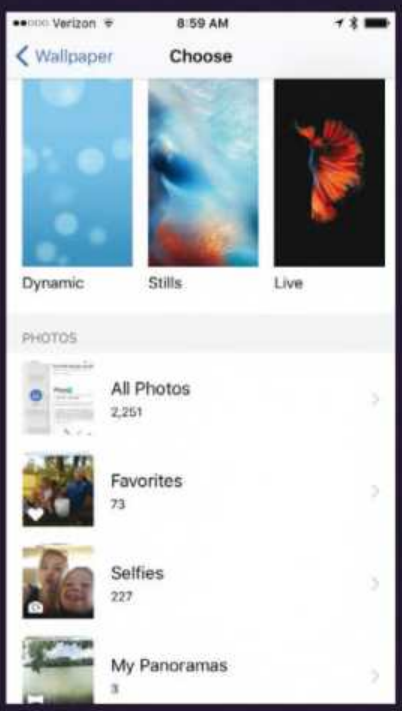
Quickly Preview an Email

Thanks to 3D Touch, you can now quickly find out what an email is about without opening it. Just press firmly on an email preview in your inbox to take a quick look at it. Without lifting your finger, swipe left or right on the preview to delete the email or mark the email unread, or swipe up to see a menu with even more options. Lift your finger to return to your inbox or press even harder to open the email.



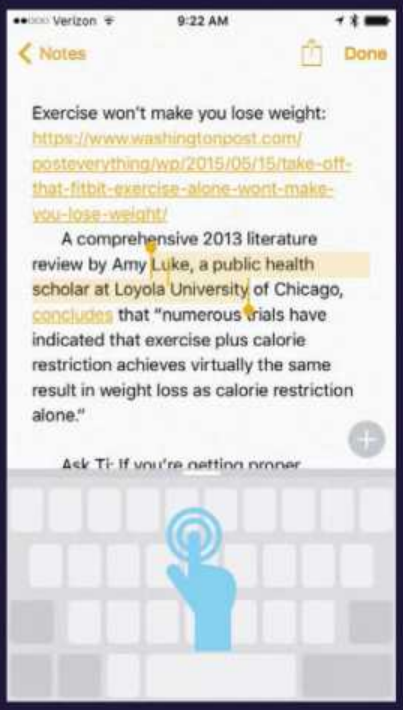
Open the App Switcher without Clicking the Home Button

Before 3D Touch, the only way to access the multitasking window was to double click the Home button. Then came the back button in iOS 9 for returning to the previous app. But if you have a 6s, you can now also switch between apps by firmly pressing the left side of the screen and swiping to the right. Swiping all the way across the screen opens the previous app, while swiping to the middle opens the app switcher.



Set a Live Photo as Your Lock Screen

The new iPhones come with a selection of live wallpaper images, but if fish behinds and the Nothing from *The NeverEnding Story* are not your idea of a good Lock Screen image, why not use your own live photo instead? Go to Settings > Wallpaper > Choose a New Wallpaper and select a Live Photo that you like for your Lock Screen. Firmly press your Lock Screen whenever you want to bring the image to life.



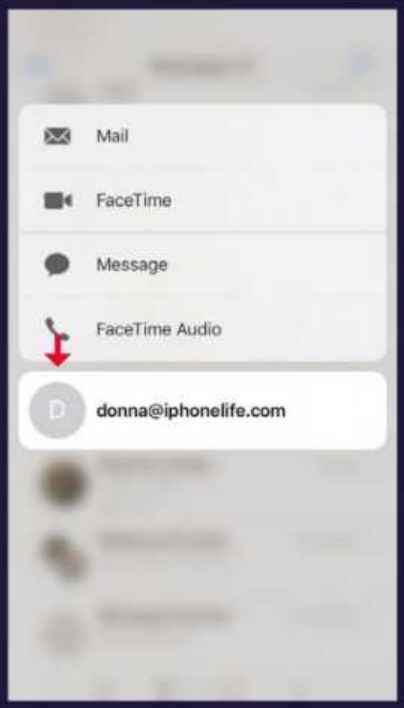
Quickly Select and Edit Text

Selecting text for editing has never been easier, thanks to 3D Touch. Press firmly on the keyboard to turn it into a trackpad and then slide your finger up to the text you want to edit. Press harder to select the text and then slide your finger along the words to increase your selection. Press hard a second time if you want to start over. Lift your finger when you're done. Tap the selection to bring up the editing options menu.



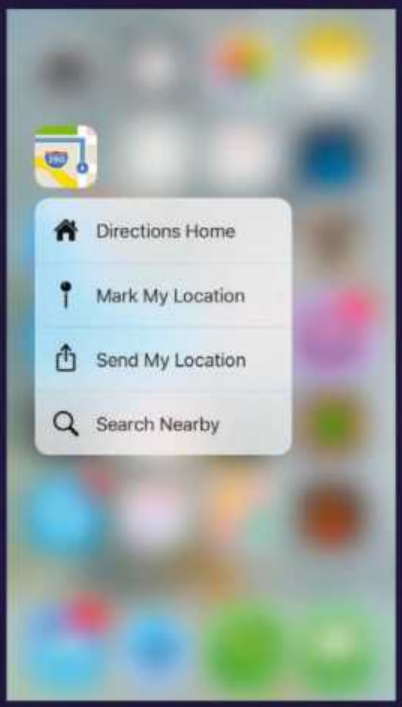
Peek at a Message to Avoid Triggering a Read Receipt

If you have read receipts enabled but want to read the occasional text without the sender knowing, just use 3D Touch to peek at the Message by pressing firmly on the Message preview. Lift your finger after you've read it and the message will still be marked as unread. If you decide you want to officially read it after all, press harder to pop into the message.



3D Touch a Profile for Quick Contact Options

Say goodbye to searching for a friend's contact info when you want to call or email them. In any app where the circle containing a contact's initials or image appears, you can now firmly press on the circle to quickly bring up a menu of options for getting in touch with that person. You'll be able to call, FaceTime, message, or email your friends and family without having to open a separate app.



"Right Click" on App Icons

With 3D Touch, you often don't even have to open an app to get where you want to go. Called Quick Actions, this feature lets you firmly press any 3D Touch-enabled app icon on your Home screen to bring up a menu of common app functions. 3D Touch the Camera app to quickly take a selfie, the Messages icon to text a recent contact, and the Maps icon for directions home.



Sarah Kingsbury is the senior web editor of iPhoneLife.com. She goes almost nowhere without her iPhone and is the main contributor to the site's Tip of the Day column. She has over a decade of experience writing and editing for online and print publications.

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HOW TO BEAT THE WINTER BLUES

BY SARAH KINGSBURY

The holidays are over and they've taken all the good cheer with them. There are only three options for getting through the next three months of frozen hell: going into hibernation, putting on your grown-up pants and dealing with the cold, or learning to love winter. Your iDevice can help you make the most of any of these options. So grab your iPhone or iPad and read on to decide how you're going to survive the frosty season ahead.

DENIAL AND HIBERNATION



One way to cope with winter is to just pretend it's not happening. You can do this by not leaving your house again until spring unless you absolutely have to. With the right apps and gear you can work from home, have food and other necessities delivered right to your door, and snuggle up on your couch and binge-watch shows

until all the snow is a distant memory. If even knowing that all that yucky weather is happening right outside your door is too much for you and a tropical getaway is not an option, you can use your iPhone or iPad to plan an imaginary vacation.

ONE WAY TO COPE WITH WINTER IS TO JUST PRETEND IT'S NOT HAPPENING.

Necessary Gear

Use the **Logitech Ultrathin Keyboard Cover** ($99.99) to transform your iPad into a full-fledged home work station, where you can relax by a cozy virtual fire on your Apple TV. When the weekend rolls around, use the **Yogibo Tablo X tablet pillow** ($29) to prop up your iPad so you can comfortably watch a movie or read a book on the couch.

Necessary Apps

For watching TV and movies, streaming services such as **Netflix** (free) and **HBO Now** (free) are great options, while the **Kindle** app (free) is perfect for reading books. You may also enjoy a good fireplace app like **FirePlace** ($0.99), food delivery apps such as **Seamless** (free) or **Amazon Fresh** (free), or travel apps like **Afar** (free) or **TripAdvisor** (free). Bonus: **Go to Meeting** (free) and **Office 365** (free) can help you stay connected to your office from home.

JUST DEALING WITH IT



You may not like winter, but you're a grown-up and you're going to get through this. You know you can ward off the winter blues by staying active, using light therapy, and tracking your mood. Likewise, you'll take the mature approach to staying safe by making sure you know what kind of weather is expected before leaving the house, knowing what to do in case of a winter emergency, and by ensuring you have plenty of backup power to charge your devices in case there's a power outage. And forget about returning home at the end of a long day to a cold, dark house. With the help of some smart-home apps and gear, your iDevice can make sure you're greeted by a warm, well-lit abode and a hot meal.

Necessary Gear

Since you'll likely be avoiding time outdoors, a smart light-therapy lamp such as the **Sunn Light** ($129) can

help balance your circadian rhythms by mimicking sunlight, while a backup battery such as the 10,000 mAh **Unibat PowerBox** ($64.99) can charge multiple devices in case a storm sweeps in and leaves you without power. You should also consider purchasing a smart kitchen helper such as the **Crock-Pot Smart Slow Cooker with WeMo** ($129.99), a smart thermostat such as the **Nest Learning Thermostat** ($249), and programmable smart bulbs such as the **TCP Connected Light Bulbs** (starting at $19.97).

Necessary Apps

Not only will you need all the accompanying apps for all your smart-home gear, but you should also go ahead and download a mood-tracking app such as **Moodnotes** ($3.99), an app like **Workout Trainer** (free) for staying active even when the weather doesn't allow outings to the gym, a weather app such as **DarkSky** ($3.99) that lets you know exactly when that winter storm is going to hit, and an app like **Emergency by American Red Cross** (free) to prepare you for when it does.

WITH THE HELP OF SOME SMART-HOME APPS AND GEAR, YOUR IDEVICE CAN MAKE SURE YOU'RE GREETED BY A WARM, WELL-LIT ABODE AND A HOT MEAL.

EMBRACING WINTER



Winter happens every year. So why not accept it and learn to have fun with the cold and snow? With the right apps and gear, you can keep track of snow conditions, document your outdoor fun, and even find like-minded winter lovers to share the fun with. Winter-themed games can help you pass the time when the weather doesn't cooperate.

Necessary Gear

Buckle down and buy yourself a nice pair of touchscreen gloves so you can keep your fingers warm while you use your iPhone out of doors (The North Face offers a few good options), and while you're at it, grab a fitness tracker and maybe a **GoPro** (starting at $199.99) too, so you can document all the fun you'll be having.

You can also use your Apple Watch or pick a tracker designed for tracking winter sports, such as the **Garmin Fenix 3** ($499.99) or the **ActiveReplay Trace** ($199.99).

WINTER HAPPENS EVERY YEAR. SO WHY NOT ACCEPT IT AND LEARN TO HAVE FUN WITH THE COLD AND SNOW?

Necessary Apps

Organize outings with fellow cold-weather fans using apps like **Meetup** (free), keep up with snow conditions with **REI Snow Report** (free), decorate your iDevice's Home and lock screens with winter-themed backgrounds from **Frozen Wallpapers** (free), and enjoy virtual winter sports with gaming apps such as **Flick Champions Winter Sports** ($0.99) and **TrialX2 Winter** (free) for days when the weather keeps you indoors.



Sarah Kingsbury is the senior web editor of iPhoneLife.com. She goes almost nowhere without her iPhone and is the main contributor to the site's Tip of the Day column. She has over a decade of experience writing and editing for online and print publications.

ENSENASOFT
www.ensenasoft.com


Mahjong Deluxe Free



Fantastic 4 In A Row Free


Doodle Hangman Free



Ultimate Word Search Free


Backgammon Deluxe Free


Puzzles Under The Hill


Pepe Porcupine


Mahjong Destiny



iOS 9 Apps

Your Guide to Apple's New and Refreshed Apps

by Jim Karpen

It's always fun getting useful new or updated apps along with the latest version of iOS. In this article, we'll help you get started with the new and reimagined apps featured in iOS 9, from News to Notes to the iCloud Drive app.

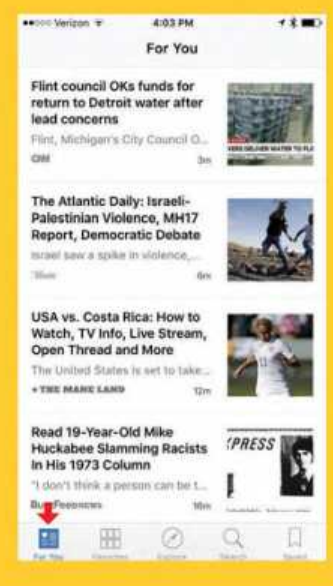
News



This all-new app gathers news from many top media organizations, such as the *New York Times*, CNN, *Time* magazine, *Slate*, ESPN, NPR, Reuters, and Fox News.

To use the News app, you need to select your favorite media and topics. The first time you open the app, it displays a list of news outlets and topics and asks you to select at least one. Scroll down and tap the ones you'd like to add, then tap Continue. You'll also have the option to receive a daily newsletter of stories: tap Skip This Step or tap Sign Me Up if you're interested.

Tapping the For You icon at the bottom shows you a selection of stories based on your choices. Tap on a headline, and it opens the full story. To return to your curated selection of news items, scroll back up toward the top and a left-pointing arrow appears in the top left corner of the screen. Tap on that, and you're instantly back to the list of news stories.





To share a news story that you're reading, tap the share icon. Tap the heart icon to help train the app that this is the sort of content you like. Tap the bookmark icon to add the article to your Saved list.

The second item in the row of navigation icons at bottom shows your Favorites: the media outlets and topics you've chosen to follow. Tapping on a Favorite lets you view only that publication or topic. Tap Edit to change which publications you follow. You may want to unfollow the Apple News Updates channel, for instance, which is selected by default.

The Explore icon lets you add more topics and media outlets (called Channels). The Search icon lets you find specific titles and search any keyword to find related and sometimes highly specific topics, such as iPad or Bernie Sanders. The Saved icon stores all the articles you've saved in one place as well as lets you view your reading History.

Tip!

Use Low Power Mode

Low Power Mode in iOS 9 can extend an iPhone's battery life up to three hours by reducing or turning off various background activities. When it's enabled, the battery icon appears yellow.

To turn on Low Power Mode, go to Settings > Battery, and toggle on Low Power Mode.

Notes





The Notes app in iOS 9 offers new formatting options and drawing tools. You can also easily add photos and videos, or even shoot them from within the app. You can create checklists, add content from other apps, and organize your notes into folders.

To use the formatting options on an iPhone, tap the "+" that appears just above the keyboard, then tap the "Aa" icon that appears at the top left of the keyboard on the iPad. The popup menu lets you change the type style by selecting Title, Heading, or Body. Plus, it gives three options for lists: Bulleted, Dashed, and Numbered.

To add a drawing to your note, tap the squiggly Sketch icon at the bottom of the note. It gives you three different pen styles to choose from, an eraser tool, a ruler for precision, and a range of different colors to select from.

To add a photo to your note, tap the camera icon at the bottom and then either select a photo from your Photo Library or select the option to Take Photo or Video.

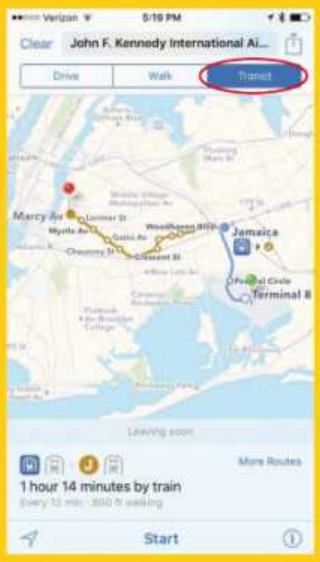
To create a checklist, tap the checkmark icon. This puts an empty circle at the beginning of the line where you're typing. If you tap on that empty circle, it turns orange and includes a checkmark.

To organize your notes, tap the back arrow at the top left of your screen to see a list of your folders for all synced Notes accounts. At the bottom of the list, tap New Folder and give it a name.

To move notes from one folder to another, open a folder and tap Edit at the top right and check off the notes you want to move. Then at the bottom left of the list, tap Move To, and select the folder you want as your destination.

To add content to a note from another app, simply tap the share icon in the app that contains the content you wish to add, then select Notes from the popup menu.

Transit Directions in Maps





Apple's Maps app now includes bus, train, ferry, and subway directions. To get transit directions, simply identify a destination and then tap Directions. The new version of Maps gives three options at the top: Drive, Walk, and Transit. Tap Transit. The app will offer up what it deems to be the best

transit route, but you can tap More Routes for alternatives and Options to customize your desired departure and arrival times and modes of transportation. Once you've selected your route, you'll see a list of steps to follow, which you can expand for greater detail, including information on which subway entrance to use.

At launch, iOS 9 Maps included transit directions for Washington, D.C.; Baltimore; Chicago; New York; Philadelphia; San Francisco; Mexico City; London; Berlin; and Toronto; as well as about 300 cities in China.

iCloud Drive App



This new app lets you access all your iClous files on your iOS device. All articles, presentations, PDFs, and images you save to your Mac's iCloud Drive folder running OS X Yosemite or later will appear in the Drive app on your iPhone. The app automatically creates folders for all the files associated with each app, such as Pages, but there's no way to manually create new folders within the app.

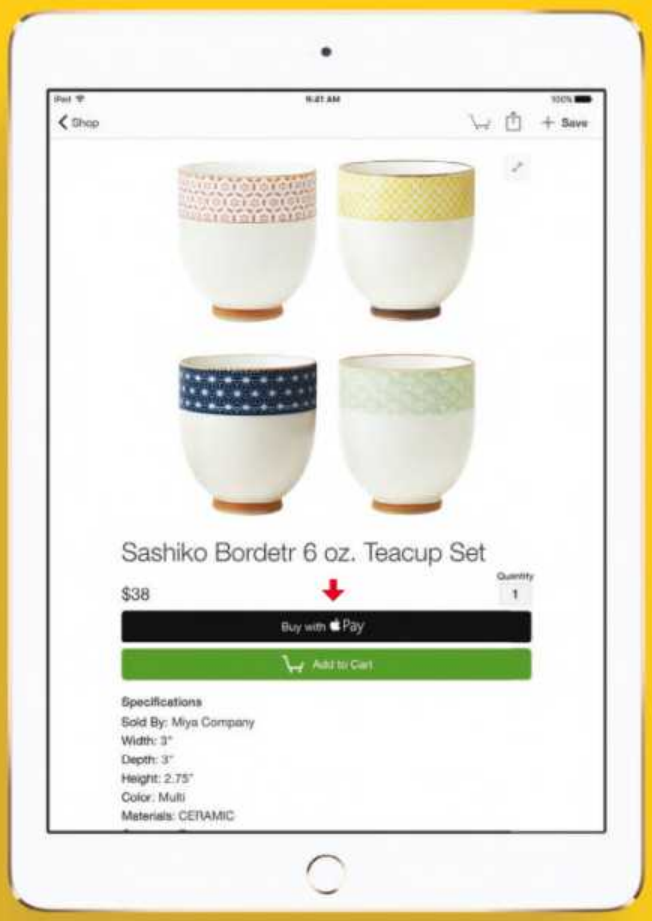
To use the iCloud Drive app on your iOS device, you'll first need to enable it in Settings. Go to Settings > iCloud > iCloud Drive, and turn on iCloud Drive and Show on Home Screen. Tap the app to view your folders and files, and tap on a file to view its contents.

To edit a particular file, you'll first need to export that file to an iCloud-enabled app. If you have a Word doc, for example, tap on the file to open it, and then tap the share icon. If you want to edit in Pages, select Export to Pages to open the document in that app. To start a new file, create a document within an iCloud-enabled app and save it to iCloud Drive from the menu of options.

Wallet

The previous Passbook app is now Wallet, and an important new feature is the ability to access the app directly from the lock screen.

To turn on lock-screen access to Wallet, on your iPhone go to Settings > Touch ID and Passcode. Then enter your passcode. Then scroll down to Allow Access When Locked, and turn Wallet to the on position.



To access Wallet from the lock screen, double-click the Home button. It will show you the cards available. Select one, and then authenticate via Touch ID.

The iPad only lets you use Apple Pay within apps. If you have an iPad with Touch ID (iPad Pro, iPad Air 2 and the iPad mini 3 & 4), turn on Wallet's Apple Pay feature by going to Settings > Wallet & Apple Pay > Add Credit or Debit Card.

You can either use your iTunes Store credit card by simply entering your card's security code, or you can use the camera to capture information on your card, and then fill in additional information, including the security code. To make a purchase within an app, tap Apple Pay button and then put your finger on Touch ID.



Jim Karpen, Ph.D, is on faculty at Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, IA. He has been writing about the revolutionary consequences of computer technology since 1994. His Ph.D dissertation anticipated the Internet revolution. His site, jimkarpen.com, contains selected regular columns written for *The Iowa Source*. Contact him at jim_karpen@iphonelife.com.

SPONSORED APPS



PadKeys Keyboard ($1.99)
Are you frustrated by the standard keyboard layout of your iPad? PadKeys offers a single layout with numbers and letters all in one place!



World of Wizmatch ($3.99)
Discover a land full of puzzles, wizards, spells, and magic in this fun match-three game featuring twenty different game modes.



Wondershare Dr. Fone for iOS ($69.95)
This data recovery tool can recover lost files from your iOS device simply by connecting it to your Mac and scanning it with the program.



Kidzfun–select ($3.99)
This game teaches your children the basics of math operations and spelling using songs, stories, educational videos, and corresponding imagery.



Construction Estimator ($6.99)
This Mac app provides 14 construction functions designed to help contractors and homeowners estimate the cost of their next project.



Zinio (Free)
Zinio is the largest digital newsstand in the world. All the major magazine titles (including yours truly) are available as single purchases or subscriptions.



Zombie Food (Free)
In this tap-to-fly game you play the role of a zombie fish with one mission: survive on select food while avoiding any mutated counterparts.



24 Hours (Free)
This app learns what you like based on what you read, letting you browse news articles by picture and headline and share them to social media.



Pulse (Free)
Pulse is a great aggregator with a beautiful modern design. You can save stories as you browse, and send them to Pocket, Instapaper, and other apps.

The Best Apps for early language learning!





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wanderfulstorybooks.com

APPS WE LOVE

With more than 1.5 million apps currently available in the App Store, deciding which ones to download can be a surprisingly overwhelming experience. Sure, there are the standard picks everyone knows about—Facebook, Evernote, VSCO—but the App Store harbors countless other little gems, if you only know where to find them. Lucky for you, we've done all the hard work for you!

This guide features only the very best apps the App Store has to offer, along with a few surprises, too! You'll find collections for gamers, foodies, and professionals, as well as roundups for your iPad, Apple Watch, and iPhone 6s (complete with the coolest 3D Touch-enabled picks). So step outside your usual app routine—you'll be glad you did.

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THE ESSENTIALS

BY RHEANNE SCHLEE

FEATURED



Find My iPhone
(Preinstalled on iOS)
This app has saved my tail more times than I can count. One time I lost my iPhone in a wicker basket at the local thrift store (still not sure how that happened) and, after opening Find my iPhone in iCloud, I was shown exactly where my phone was and was even able to lock it with a passcode and leave a message on its screen in case someone discovered it before I could. You can also trigger a two-minute-long sound on your phone if you've lost it in your couch cushions or cabinets (guilty) and even wipe all of your data if you know your phone's been stolen. You may not realize you need this app now, but trust me when I say it's a great investment for later down the road.

THE BASICS



Google Maps
(Free)
Google Maps remains one of the best turn-by-turn navigation apps on the market, offering voice-guided directions and detailed business information.



Gmail
(Free)
Easily search through your emails, switch between multiple accounts, and even view Google+ activity or respond to Google Calendar invites.



Overcast
(Free)
This is a much more straightforward alternative to Apple's Podcast app. Along with the basics, you can normalize sound levels and increase speed.



Evernote
(Free)
There's a reason this great note-taking app is so popular: on top of letting you create notes and to-do lists, it lets you manage content with tags.



Mint
(Free)
This app is perfect for managing your finances. It tracks your spending, reminds you about upcoming bills, and lets you view your credit score.



SwiftKey
(Free)
This third-party keyboard offers amazing autocorrect and text-prediction technology and lets you swipe to text or customize your keyboard with color.



ProCamera
($4.99)
Want more camera control? ProCamera offers advanced editing features that allow you to control exposure, white balance, and focus.



Lyft
(Free)
If you live in a big city, Lyft is a must-have app for getting around. Simply request a ride and Lyft will use your phone's GPS to send a ride your way!



Dropbox
(Free)
When your storage starts to get too full, upload all your extra photos, documents, and videos to Dropbox. You can access them anywhere!

INFORMATION



Yahoo Finance
(Free)
Track real-time performance on the stocks and indexes you care about. If you want more detailed information, you can also view data on companies.



The Weather Channel
(Free)
When it comes to accurate weather reports, most people rely on the Weather Channel. This app features a 10-day forecast and weather-related news.



Yelp
(Free)
Whether you're looking for a good restaurant, business, or park, you can rely on Yelp for up-to-date information and ample user reviews.

BEST IN 3D TOUCH

BY RHEANNE SCHLEE

FEATURED



Workflow
($3.99)
Want to call a local pizza place and automatically receive a reminder to pick your order up? You can do that with this best-in-class productivity app. Workflow's 3D Touch integration lets iPhone 6s and 6s Plus users pin up to four of their favorite tasks to Workflow's Quick Actions menu and then launch them directly from the Home screen by firmly pressing the Workflow app icon. You can create your own tasks or choose from popular options in the app's Workflow Gallery. You can even use Peek and Pop to preview tasks and use specific editing tools.

QUICK ACTIONS



OpenTable
(Free)
Use 3D Touch to glance at your favorite locations and view upcoming reservations, or use Peek and Pop to book reservations and check out reviews.



Day One
($4.99)
This stellar journaling app now gives you 3D Touch shortcuts to quickly compose a new entry or automatically add a photo you took in your Photos app.



Shazam
(Free)
You can now use Shazam to identify songs and visual elements (such as books and posters) simply by pressing down on the app's icon.



HIPSTAMATIC Camera
(Free)
With Quick Actions, you can choose whether you want to shoot a portrait, snap a food or sunset shot, or even edit the last photo you took.



Curious
(Free)
This app aims to teach you new skills, using Quick Actions to let you view daily lessons and watch CuriousTV courses.



News360
(Free)
View top stories, local news, or saved articles from the Home page, or open the app and peek at a story to reveal a three-sentence summary.

TIP

What is 3D Touch?
The iPhone 6s and 6s Plus ship with 3D Touch, a feature that reveals extra controls when you press harder on the screen.



Travel Guide by AFAR
(Free)
Search for interesting things to do around you, access your travel itinerary, or check out recently viewed city guides—all right from the Home screen!



Blue Apron
(Free)
This recipe and food delivery app lets you use 3D Touch to do things like view your Delivery Schedule and peruse recently viewed recipes.

PEEK & POP



AG Drive
($3.99)
One of the first games to use Apple's 3D Touch feature, this futuristic racer lets you use a firm press to accelerate your vehicle.



Magic Piano
(Free)
Press down hard on a note to produce a louder, more powerful sound, or press lightly to create a quieter, softer effect.



Endless Alphabet
($6.99)
In this app, children can use 3D Touch to interact with words and letters, each character responding differently depending on how hard you press.

iPhone +iPad Life MAGAZINE

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FOR THE IPAD

BY JIM KARPEN

BEST OF THE BEST



Fantastical 2
($9.99)
Fantastical 2, one of the most popular productivity apps, elegantly combines your reminders and calendar into a single interface called the Fantastical Dashboard. It's divided into three areas: DayTicker, a scrolling week-view pane across the top; a scrolling color-coded list at left that combines appointments and dated reminders that you can check off with a single tap; and a month-view calendar on the right side. Swipe down on the DayTicker for a full-screen week view. Tapping on an event or a reminder brings up a pane on the right side that shows more detail. You can add reminders and appointments just by speaking. Fantastical works with the Apple Watch and syncs with iCloud, Google Calendar, and Microsoft Exchange.

TEXTING & CALLING



Viber
(Free)
Send texts and make phone and video calls to other Viber users for free, and make low-cost calls to any mobile or landline number.



textPlus Free Text + Calls (Free)
Use your iPad as a phone! Send free texts to any US or Canadian mobile phone, make low-cost calls worldwide, and call other textPlus users for free.

TIP

With textPlus, instead of purchasing credits to make calls, you can earn free credits by watching short advertising videos in the app or by completing offers.

PRODUCTIVITY



Google Docs, Sheets, Slides (All Free)
In 2014, Google launched its online office suite as standalone apps. The apps are easy to use, and the collaboration features are best in class.



Astropad Graphics Tablet ($49.99)
Turn your iPad into a professional graphics tablet. Connect via Wi-Fi or USB and draw in Photoshop, Illustrator, Lightroom, and Pixelmator.



Paper
(Free)
Use this app with **FiftyThree's Pencil Stylus** ($59.95) to sketch out your ideas, annotate pictures and screenshots, and take simple notes.



Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint (All Free)
This productivity suite boasts Dropbox integration and split-view multitasking support, but advanced features require an Office 365 subscription.



Noteshelf
($7.99)
This app lets you take notes, annotate PDFs, record audio, and make sketches with a variety of pen types, templates, and notebook covers.



Duet Display
($15.99)
Turn your iPad into an extra display for your computer by downloading this app on both your devices and then connecting them via a Lightning cable.



Adobe Voice
(Free)
Easily create professional looking voiceover slideshows and animated videos by drawing upon music and images from Adobe's huge royalty-free library.



Enlight
($3.99)
This versatile photo-editing app lets you reduce noise, brighten images, add filters, crop from inside a photo, and correct tone, details, and color.



GoodReader
($4.99)
Use GoodReader to view, manage, and annotate PDFs. You can extract text, combine files, create ZIP archives, and even listen to audio files.

APPLE WATCH APPS

BY TODD BERNHARD

FEATURED



iTranslate
(Free)
A universal translator has always been the stuff of science-fiction until the iPhone made it a reality. Now, the Apple Watch has gained that capability. Talk, and the watch recognizes and translates your words in real time. It's nothing short of magical! There's a Glances mode and a Complications option, so you can quickly launch iTranslate when you encounter someone who speaks a different language. If you really want to show off the power of the Apple Watch, iTranslate is a good way to do so.

LIFESTYLE



Wink
(Free)
The ultimate smart-home app, Wink lets you control compatible devices like door locks, garage doors, lights, and music from your watch.



1Password
(Free)
In our digital world, password managers are a must. 1Password now lets you access select passwords from your watch, protected by a 4-digit code.



Things
($9.99)
This award-winning productivity app allows you to enter tasks via Siri and track your progress toward daily goals.



Starbucks
(Free)
Use this app to access rewards and prepaid cards, pay for your coffee with Apple Pay, and even get directions to the nearest Starbucks location.



Nike+ Running
(Free)
This fitness-tracking app lets you compete in challenges with friends and integrates with Apple's HealthKit so all your data is stored in one place.



Lifesum
(Free)
This healthy habit-building app manages to make it easy to log meals, water intake, and exercise right from your wrist.

TIP

Customize Your Watch Screen
In some situations, you'll want to use an app repeatedly within a short timeframe. Lucky for you, you can customize your watch's wake screen to return to your desired app.

Just go to Settings > General > Wake Screen, and select Previous Activity. That way, you don't need to fumble to find the app you just used.



Uber
(Free)
Request a ride with Uber, view a photo of the driver and car, and view your ETA, all right from your wrist.

INFORMATION



Trivia Crack
(Free)
Trivia Crack is a quick and easy game to play on your Apple Watch, offering bright colors and large buttons for quick gaming sessions!



Lateres
($0.99)
This retro brick-breaking game has you use the Digital Crown to move the paddle sideways so you can knock out bricks like the good old days!



Runeblade
(Free)
Runeblade is one of the few games designed specifically for the Apple Watch, offering bite-sized entertainment in the form of 5–15-second battles.

HEALTH & FITNESS

BY JACQUI LANE

FEATURED



CARROT Fit
($2.99)
For some of us, gentle encouragement just doesn't cut it. CARROT Fit's hilariously sadistic digital fitness coach doesn't mince words; its singular goal is to trim down your "flabby carcass." Alternately inspiring and threatening, ridiculing and bribing, CARROT uses humor to get you to stick to your fitness goals. Use the diet and weight tracker to log your food and daily weigh-ins, but be prepared: if CARROT notices that you've gained weight, it won't hesitate to call you out on it. The aptly named 7 Minutes in Hell workout will put you through your paces in exercises like Celebrity Face Punches and Dragon Mating Dances, leaving you sweaty and laughing.

FITNESS



Sworkit Lite
(Free)
Short on time and equipment? No problem. Sworkit builds custom workouts to fill your spare time and that only include bodyweight exercises.



Nike+ Training Club
(Free)
Get fit with 100+ workouts from Nike trainers. Stream to your TV with AirPlay, receive tips from experts, and connect with friends for motivation.



Strava Running and Cycling (Free)
Track your progress and statistics, create your own routes, and compete with other users with this fun GPS-based running and cycling app.



Zombies, Run!
(Free)
In this audio adventure, you're the hero running from a horde of hungry zombies and collecting supplies to fortify your base.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Department of Health and Human Services recommends 150+ minutes of moderate aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic exercise each week.



Gym Hero
(Free)
Track your progress, share it with friends, and save your favorite exercises with this easy-to-use tracker designed specifically for fitness.

HEALTH



Instant Heart Rate
(Free)
Simply place your finger over your iPhone's camera and this app detects your heartbeat by tracking changes to your skin's pigment.



MindShift
(Free)
Don't let anxiety rule your life. Use MindShift to help you take control of it with techniques that help you overcome feelings of stress or panic.



Sleep Cycle Alarm Clock
($0.99)
A good night's sleep is fundamental. This app tracks your sleep quality and wakes you during your lightest sleep cycle so you feel more rested.



Glow
(Free)
Manage your reproductive health by tracking your periods, symptoms, and medications. Gain fertility insights with ovulation tracking.

HIDDEN GEM

Daily Water (Free)
We all know consuming enough water is essential to good health, yet studies show that the average person drinks less than what the Institute of Medicine recommends (13 cups of beverage daily for men, 9 cups for women). Daily Water is a tracker dedicated to keeping you hydrated, with customizable reminders that help you stick to your intake goals.

MOTIVATION

Pact
(Free)
Put some skin in the game with Pact, a fitness app that offers financial rewards for sticking to your workout goals—and penalties if you don't.

Charity Miles
(Free)
If helping others motivates you, check out this app, which donates money to the charity of your choice for every mile you log.

Happify
(Free)
Choose the track in this brain-training app that helps you meet your goals, whether it's building confidence or achieving career success.

Pump Up
(Free)
Share your fitness goals and favorite workouts with this social network app designed for like-minded people looking to better their health.

DID YOU KNOW?

Studies show that music is more than just pleasant background noise when you work out. According to a study from Brunel University, listening to music while you exercise can increase your endurance by up to 15 percent. It also distracts from pain and fatigue and may even increase metabolic efficiency. So queue up your favorite tunes, hit the gym, and cruise through your workout routine.

NUTRITION

Rise – Nutrition & Weight Loss Coach (Free)
Rise pairs you with your own personal nutritionist who offers feedback on your meals and designs a healthy eating plan that works for you.

My Fitness Pal
(Free)
Tracking calories is an important part of losing (or gaining) weight, and this app's huge food database and simple interface make it convenient and easy.

ShopWell
(Free)
This barcode scanner makes healthy shopping easier by rating foods on a 100-point scale according to how well they meet your particular health needs.



SOCIAL

BY RHEANNE SCHLEE

FEATURED

Facebook
(Free)
Love it or hate it, there's no doubt that Facebook is the most popular social media platform to date, boasting over 1.55 billion users, as well as being the most downloaded app in the App Store. Facebook allows users to share their thoughts and special moments in the form of status updates, photos, and videos, making this social media giant a go-to app for connecting with people. Users can receive notifications when particular people share a photo or status update—think close family members or dear friends—and they can even play games or leave messages on friends' pages.

STAYING CONNECTED

Twitter
(Free)
Use Twitter to share brief, 140-character posts (complete with photos and videos) with your followers and stay informed on the latest news.

LinkedIn
(Free)
Built for business professionals, LinkedIn allows you to connect with colleagues and companies, browse and save jobs, and manage your connections.

WhatsApp
(Free)
Connect your phone to Wi-Fi and send unlimited texts—as well as photos, videos, and audio notes—to friends, wherever you are.

Foursquare
(Free)
Use this location-based app to check in to establishments for all your friends to see, receive coupons, and win prizes.

HIDDEN GEM

Droppie (Free)
Take pictures and then share them with strangers by "leaving" them in a particular location to be "picked up" by other users.

Google+
(Free)
Google+ offers a timeline of posts from the people you follow. You can group posts into collections and join circles to connect with likeminded users.

CREATIVE SHARING

Tumblr
(Free)
With Tumblr, you can create a mini blog of inspiring quotes, funny GIFs and videos, and even snapshots of your cat's crazy antics.

Pinterest
(Free)
Plan parties, meals, and even the layout of your home with this image-based social app that lets you pin all your ideas to personalized boards.

Whisper
(Free)
Got something to get off your chest? Whisper lets you anonymously share your secrets with other users and even have private conversations.

Snapchat
(Free)
This messaging service lets you send self-destructing photos and videos to your friends, send money and texts, and create stories.

Vine
(Free)
You know those funny 6-second videos you keep seeing? Thank Vine. This app lets you share stories in the form of short, looping videos.

QuizUp
(Free)
This multi-player trivia game takes socializing to a whole different level, allowing users to connect with friends by playing games together.

PRODUCTIVITY

BY KENNETH BOSHELL

FEATURED



IF By IFTTT
(Free)
This app helps you automate just about every task on your phone by creating "recipes" (IFTTT's parlance for creating and managing app-to-app interactions). With those recipes, you can do things like receive reminders to apply sunscreen during a particularly sunny day, or save tagged images of you on Facebook to your Dropbox. One of our favorite functions is using IF to integrate Siri into nearly all of your favorite apps. For instance, when you tell Siri to add a note to Reminders, you can have the note automatically upload to Any.Do or Evernote. You can find hundreds of other recipes online, just in case you have doubts about the power of this app.

MANAGING YOUR LIFE



Any.do
(Free)
Any.do conceals a myriad of features beneath its easy-to-use interface, including to-do lists, location-based reminders, and sharing options.



Sunrise Calendar
(Free)
Aside from all the basic calendar functions you'd expect, Sunrise really shines in how it integrates with apps like Google Maps and Evernote.



Simplenote
(Free)
This Notes app replacement allows you to organize all of your lists and ideas and keep them organized with tags that you can easily search.



Microsoft Outlook
(Free)
With great filtering, a unified inbox, swipe options, and a superb search feature, Microsoft's email client steamrolls Apple's default Mail app.



LastPass
(Free)
LastPass safeguards your passwords with a single master password. Automatically log in to sites or view passwords on your Apple Watch.



Google Drive
(Free)
This cloud-based service syncs data between all your iDevices, provides ample free space, and lets you upgrade your storage limit easily.

GATHERING RESEARCH AND INFORMATION



Pocket
(Free)
Pocket's sole purpose is to store articles and videos for you to read later. This simple yet powerful app also lets you save videos offline.



Pocket Casts
($3.99)
Improving upon Apple's basic podcast manager, Pocket Casts has a fresh layout, cross platform syncing, and curated lists of new shows.



Asana
(Free)
This app is a great resource for businesses or other groups, allowing users to collaborate on projects and keep track of assignments with reminders.



Reeder 2
($4.99)
This RSS reader lets you store your favorite news feeds in one place and syncs with services like Readability.



Workflow
($3.99)
While IFTTT lets you set up one task to automatically trigger another, Workflow lets you create a series of tasks that you can launch on demand.



Humin
(Free)
Humin replaces your outdated Phone app by using context—how you met, who you know, etc.—to provide more detailed information about your contacts.

APP TRIVIA

Little-Known Facts & Figures about the Rise of Apple's App Store



33 BILLION

The amount Apple has paid out to app developers.



Facebook

is the most downloaded app of all time.

1. Facebook
2. Facebook Messenger
3. YouTube
4. Instagram
5. Skype
6. WhatsApp Messenger
7. Find My iPhone
8. Google Maps
9. Twitter
10. iTunes U



30 CENTS

The amount Apple makes for every dollar spent in the App Store.



10,000

Apple Watch Apps

are currently available for Apple's first wearable.



627,000 JOBS

have been created by the iOS app economy.



7 YEARS

have passed since Apple launched the App Store with 500 apps on July 10, 2008.



9 MILLION

The number of registered Apple developers to date.



1.5 MILLION

apps are available in the App Store.



83%

of apps are "zombies," receiving little to no downloads.

SOURCES: Apple Inc., App Annie's 2015 report "The Most Popular iPhone and iPad Apps of All Time," Statista Inc., Adjust July 2014 report "Birth, life and death of an app."

Reno Martin/shutterstock
Martial Red/shutterstock
Dacian G/shutterstock
Walking-onstreet/shutterstock
In-Finity/shutterstock
Sentavio/shutterstock
Macrovector/shutterstock
VikaSuh/shutterstock
John T Takai/shutterstock

PHOTO & VIDEO APPS

BY BECCA LUDLUM

BEST OF THE BEST



Snapseed
(Free)
This app by Google is what tried-and-true iPhoneographers use to tweak their photos to make them more beautiful. Many compare Snapseed to a desktop photo-editing program—minus the clutter and confusion. The Snapseed interface allows you to put your picture center stage and pinch and swipe your way to professional-looking images. Adjust brightness and color to make your images pop, apply filters, and use the Healing tool to remove dust and blemishes. If you're looking for a way to brand your photos by using a certain look, try stacking filters on top of one another and saving the stack to use again.

EDITING & EFFECTS



Adobe Photoshop Express (Free)
This app includes Photoshop's basic adjustment tools such as cropping, red-eye removal, image quality correction, and RAW photo support.



PicTapGo
($1.99)
This app lets you capture photos with its built-in camera, save custom filters, and adjust exposure, making it a one-stop shop for photographers.



VSCO
(Free)
Shoot, edit, and share pictures sporting tasteful filters and effects. Connect with other users and build a personal collection.



Camera+
($2.99)
The built-in camera stabilizer is reason enough to use the Camera+ app! Other features include a front-facing flash, clarity filter, and digital zoom.



Afterlight
($0.99)
Afterlight boasts 74 different filters—the most of any app I've tried—as well as a variety of frames, textures, and transformation tools.

HIDDEN GEM

Over ($3.99)
Although this app has been around for a while, it has recently been redesigned, and it is beautiful! Over lets you use your own photos (or free stock photos), and then add watermarks to them, blend photo features together, add custom fonts, take advantage of drop shadows, and so much more. My favorite feature of this app is how you can automatically format images for social media.

RECORDING TOOLS



Stop Motion Studio
(Free)
This app offers everything required to make stop-motion videos, from image import and editing to voiceover and soundtrack support.



Animoto Video Maker
(Free)
Create movies from a collection of 50 video styles and 100+ songs. Easily add intros and outros, too! Pay a monthly fee to access extra features.



iMovie
($4.99)
Apple's own iMovie is the most popular video-editing app among my friends. It covers all the basics and might be all you need for movie-making.



Splice
(Free)
Use Splice to add filter effects and text, narrate work, and apply basic animations to your videos. Once done, share your creations to social media.



Cameo
(Free)
This app by Vimeo breaks video creation into easy steps: import and trim your clip, choose a theme and soundtrack, and share with friends.

GAMES

BY SIVA OM

BEST OF THE BEST



Vainglory
(Free)
This fast-paced, multi-faceted Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) has taken the international gaming community by storm. In the relatively short time since its debut on the world stage at Apple's iPhone 6 unveiling, Vainglory has set a new standard for its genre of mobile gaming and has introduced some of the most tactically exciting and competitive gameplay available in the App Store. Vainglory pits two teams of three heroes against each other for an epic capture-the-flag style contest lasting up to a half hour. If you are looking for an unapologetically core game with gorgeous console-caliber graphics, look no further than Vainglory.

TOP FREE GAMES



Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft (Free)
In this beautifully illustrated live-action card battler, gamers use their decks to cast spells and out-maneuver opponents.



PAC-MAN 256
(Free)
The infamous glitch that occurred on level 256 of the original Pac-Man inspired this endless mazer— a worthy successor to the arcade classic.



Two Dots
(Free)
The premise of this game is simple: connect matching dots within a limited number of moves. Doing so requires more strategy than you think!



Real Racing 3
(Free)
Real Racing 3 is the most graphically advanced racing game in the Apple ecosystem, with both live and time-shifted multiplayer modes.



Crossy Road
(Free)
This modern take on the cross-the-road genre features retro graphics, exciting gameplay, and tons of characters waiting to be unlocked.

PREMIUM GAMES



Minecraft Pocket Edition ($6.99)
If you can imagine it, you can build it in this explorative game in which you create elaborate 3D structures from textured blocks.



Implosion
($9.99)
This premium game is a fast-paced, hack 'n' slash shooter with spectacular graphics and an intriguing storyline voiced by talented actors.



Transistor
($9.99)
This role-playing game combines quick thinking and fantastic imagery to create a riveting sci-fi adventure.



Monument Valley
($3.99)
With graphics inspired by geometric surrealism, this game is one of the most creative and innovative puzzlers in the App Store.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to a 2015 report from the Entertainment Software Association, 155 million Americans play games regularly and four out of five US households have a gaming device. Contrary to popular belief, women comprise a large portion of gamers (44 percent, to be exact). It's also interesting to note that teens aren't the only ones who love a good game; the average age of the American gamer is 35, and 27 percent of gamers are older than 50.



Five Nights At Freddy's 4 ($2.99)
What's spookier than playing the role of a child, alone in the dark, with horrifying fanged creatures relentlessly closing in on you?

TRAVEL

BY VIOLET COOPER

BEST OF THE BEST



Trip Advisor
(Free)
TripAdvisor lets you search for and book the best deals in flights, hotels, and restaurants. The real power of this service lies in the millions of user reviews and pictures. See user-uploaded photos of hotel rooms before deciding where to stay and connect with other travelers via forums and ask questions about the best activities a town has to offer. Once you have found the best place in town, save it to your favorites and share your own experience with other users.

ROAD TRIPS



GasBuddy
(Free)
Find the cheapest gas in town! Search by city or zip code, or display nearby stations listed with the approximate cost of gas per gallon.



iExit
(Free)
This app uses GPS mapping to show you what services are available at upcoming exits and even lets you save and locate your favorite restaurants.



CityMapper
(Free)
Use this app to find your way through major cities. It reduces travel to a linear path using all modes of transportation and includes travel disruptions.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL



Postagram
(Free)
For $0.99 or $1.99, you can turn pictures on your phone into glossy postcards that you can then mail directly to your loved ones.



LoungeBuddy
(Free)
Travelers can use LoungeBuddy to view and book lounge services at airports around the world, browsing their amenities, user reviews, and photos.



TripIt
(Free)
TripIt organizes your trip by creating a detailed itinerary that includes car rentals, restaurants, and more using the confirmation emails you've received.



MAPS.ME
(Free)
MAPS.ME lets you access maps from all over the world, even offline, which is useful for finding your way around remote locations.



Google Translate
(Free)
Quickly translates text or speech in 90 languages. Talk or type in a language and Google then translates orally and with text in the chosen language.



Skyscanner
(Free)
Search millions of flights on hundreds of airlines and filter them based on budget, arrival and departure time, and other relevant information.



Onavo Extend
(Free)
Use this app to reduce the amount of data you consume on your phone so you don't end up with a catastrophic bill after a vacation.



Skype
(Free)
Send messages and make calls to other users for free anywhere in the world, or make low-cost calls to mobile phones and landlines.

HIDDEN GEM

Entrain (Free)
This app helps you minimize jet-lag by teaching you when to seek light and shade in order to adjust your circadian rhythm.

FOOD & DRINK

BY STEVE BOSS

FEATURED



ChefsFeed
(Free)
Loads of apps offer dining advice, but who has the time to vet the predominantly amateur reviews on **Yelp** (free), **Foursquare** (free), or other apps? ChefsFeed's expert reviewers are chefs. And not just any old chefs—but big names like John Besh, Daniel Boulud, and Brooks Headley. Follow them and discover where and what they eat. Currently, the app covers more than 50 cities with over 1,500 participating chefs. Check out the cheeky chef videos, food guides, and great articles, too.

COOKING AT HOME



NYT Cooking
(Free)
This app features 17,000 recipes from *New York Times* food writers like Julia Moskin, Molly O'Neill, and Melissa Clark.



ChefSteps
(Free)
Upgrade your kitchen IQ with instructional videos, tips, tricks, and creative recipes presented in an engaging, fun fashion.



Joy of Cooking
($7.99)
This app features the complete kitchen classic enhanced with photos, pre-set digital timers, smart shopping lists, and metric conversions.



How to Cook Everything
($9.99)
This app is a great source of uncomplicated recipes from trustworthy *New York Times* columnist Mark Bittman.



Kitchen Stories
(Free)
I relish this app's step-by-step instructions with video, and its simple design that makes recipes quick to find.

APP GRAVEYARD

Farewell, Mario Batali Cooks
Before disappearing last summer, this app featured cooking videos with Batali, 63 amazing Italian recipes, and wine pairings.

OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN



Instagram
(Free)
This is the app foodies use for inspiration. I suggest following @massimobottura, @reneredzepinoma, @gaggan, @marcvetri, and @kenjilopezalt.



GrubHub
(Free)
A lifesaver on the road, this delivery app serves up cuisine from 30,000 restaurants, letting you find, order, and pay for your meal through the app.



Seafood Watch
(Free)
This is the ultimate sustainable seafood guide, helping you to choose fish at restaurants and the grocery store.



Pocket Wine
($3.99)
Listing over 100 grape varieties and blends, Pocket Wine helps you pair the right wine with food and create a personal tasting profile.



Wild Edibles Forage
($5.99)
Eat healthy and cheap by discovering over 250 "weeds" in the yard and woods with this app that provides great images and food prep ideas.

SURFIN' SAFARI

Some of the best food info is only available online. Open Safari and explore Eater, Serious Eats, The Daily Meal, Food Republic, Food52, and Grub Street.

NEWS & EDUCATION

BY BECCA LUDLUM

BEST OF THE BEST



Khan Academy
(Free)
The fact that this app is completely free while offering a massive collection of quality content is astounding. Khan Academy, the best educational app on the market, offers more than 10,000 videos and exercises in the categories of science, economics, humanities, history, and math. A little-known feature of the app is its test preparation material, with150,000 interactive Common Core math exercises alone with optional hints. In addition, the app will help you (or your student) study for the SAT, GMAT, and MCAT exams, and lets you handwrite answers on the app's scratchpad, which it transcribes using MyScript. Did I mention that it's free?

EDUCATION



iTunes U
(Free)
Apple's own educational app offers more than one million free lessons from instructors all over the globe, including Yale and MIT.



BrainPOP
(Free)
Kids loves BrainPOP. This app lets them watch free daily educational movies and then test their knowledge with interactive quizzes.



TED
(Free)
TED hosts inspiring talks on virtually any topic you can think of, and the app lets can build playlists tailored to your interests.



Lynda.com
(Free)
With subscriptions starting at $19.99/month, you get access to Lynda's video courses on subjects ranging from graphic design to marketing.



Fit Brains Trainer
(Free)
This app strengthens your intellect and helps you improve focus and concentration with quick daily games and mental workout sessions.



Sidewire
(Free)
Sidewire offers political news from all angles so you can make more educated decisions. View top news coverage and chat with like-minded users.

NEWS



NPR News
(Free)
Fans of the non-profit radio organization will love tuning in to local and national programs and making playlists of favorite shows.



CNN
(Free)
Among the many up-and-coming apps available, we can't forget our tried and true original sources of breaking national news.



Apple News
(Free)
Choose the topics that interest you most from leading news sources such as CNN, FOX, ESPN, and Wired.



Medium
(Free)
If you want a break from clickbait journalism, Medium is a nice alternative, allowing you to write posts and read original content from other users.

HIDDEN GEM

Startup News (Free)
For the entrepreneurially inclined, this app provides inspiration with the latest news from startups around the world.



Nuzzel
(Free)
Nuzzel lets you see the stories your friends are sharing on Facebook and Twitter without having to sift through selfies and status updates.

MUSIC

BY KENNETH BOSHELL

FEATURED



Apple Music
(Preinstalled on iOS)
It's not every day that we feature one of Apple's own apps in a roundup, but Apple Music has managed to thoroughly impress us. Offering nearly complete access to the iTunes catalog with access to more than 30 million songs, this app is the front-runner for streaming music, allowing you to follow your favorite artists, create your own playlists, and use Beats 1 radio to listen to live music broadcasts from cities around the world. This app is accessible and intuitive, and it lets you access all of the music and playlists you've accumulated over time from the iTunes Store. Apple Music's free three-month trial might be enough to tempt even Spotify loyalists, but after that, it costs $9.99/month or $14.99/month for the family.

FOR LISTENING



Google Play Music
(Free)
Google Play offers a monthly list of curated radio for free and routinely offers free albums that you can permanently add to your collection.



Pandora
(Free)
Pandora is routinely voted the best at streaming radio —and for good reason! This app excels at what it does, with no frills and a simple interface.



Youtube
(Free)
YouTube is not just for cat videos, you know. It also offers lots of great music listening capabilities. Just look under the #Music channel.



Tidal
(Free)
Despite its high price of up to $19.99/month, this newcomer is rising in popularity due to its beautiful interface and high-fidelity sound quality.



Amazon Music with Prime Music (Free)
If you have an Amazon Prime subscription, you also have access to more than a million free songs. And Amazon Music's radio stations are no joke either!



Spotify
(Free)
Spotify, Apple Music's greatest competitor, offers a great playlist-building experience and social community for a monthly fee of $12.99.

FOR DISCOVERING NEW MUSIC



Scrobbler
(Free)
This app takes the music you own and helps you discover new artists by showing you related albums based on algorithms and crowd sourcing.



SoundCloud
(Free)
Up-and-coming artists continuously upload their music to this service, making it a standard-bearer among music discovery apps.



Jamendo
(Free)
Jamendo offers thousands of free songs from independent artists who have generously shared their work for us to enjoy.



Hype Machine
($3.99)
Want to stay up to date with today's top hits? This app scans the web's most popular blogs to bring you trending songs and albums.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), the Beatles have sold more records than Billy Joel and Michael Jackson combined. However, Rihanna has sold the most digital singles—more than 100 million downloads, to be exact.

THE PERFECT CASE

BY SIVA OM

TOP PICKS FOR THE IPHONE 6S



Rearth Ringke Fusion
(Starting at $10.99)

Do you typically leave your iPhone unencumbered by a case? Well, we all know that in daily life, that isn't the most practical decision. Your next best option is this crystal-clear case from Rearth, featuring a scratch-resistant back, shock-absorbent bumper, and touchscreen protector. My favorite detail of this minimalist case is a set of protective covers that keep dirt and moisture away from your iPhone's Lightning port and audio jack.



Griffin Survivor Summit
($49.99)

The Summit is the best ultra-protective case Griffin has ever designed. It's affordable, especially considering the level of protection it delivers. Its multi-layer shell keeps your phone dry even when doused with water and disperses impact away from the phone when you drop it. Opt for the clear, reflective back to let the beauty of your iPhone show through.



Amzer CRUSTA Rugged Case with Holster
($45)

The Amzer CRUSTA lets your iPhone shine through its transparent tempered glass backing while its customizable polycarbonate shell provides dependable protection from impact and the elements. It also includes a glass screen protector that you'll barely notice when using the touchscreen and a clip-on backing with a holster for easy toting.



X-Doria Defense Lux
($59.99)

This professionally styled case complements formal attire and is perfect for most business environments while still providing significant impact protection for your iPhone. The Defense Lux has a soft rubber layer on the inside that's reinforced by impact-resistant polycarbonate. Completing the case is an aluminum outer frame and a choice of four elegant rear-panel options: black carbon, silver carbon, black leather, and brown croc skin.



Otterbox Commuter Series Wallet Case
($44.90)

Apple Pay has almost eliminated the need to carry a credit card—but not completely. In those moments when you need a card or other essentials like your driver's license or business cards, the Commuter's secret stash back is pretty handy. Aside from its compact storage drawer, the Commuter Wallet provides the same high level of protection against drops that you've come to expect from Otterbox.



Catalyst Case
($69.99)

If you're looking for maximum protection with minimal bulk, look no further than Catalyst. This case boasts the most impressive stats of any other waterproof, all-day-wear case on the market. Not only does the Catalyst barely add any extra weight or bulk to your iPhone, but it also lets you easily access all of your device's controls and ports.

IPAD PRO CASES



WaterField Outback Solo
($89)

A lot of iPad Pro owners will want more than just a good case if they are going to keep their new tablet safe and protected. Enter the Outback Solo. Made of waxed canvas, premium leather, and a neoprene interior, this fashionable sleeve securely holds your iPad Pro (even one with a case on it) with sufficient storage space to tote your iPhone as well as other accessories, including charging cables, earbuds, pens, a backup battery, and small notepads.



Catalyst Case for the iPad Pro
(Available March 2016, Price TBA)

If you're already familiar with Catalyst and its line of exceptional waterproof cases, then the sleek, streamlined design of its case for Apple's largest iPad won't come as a surprise to you. It provides reliable and extreme protection for your iPad Pro—keeping it safe from scratches, impact, and exposure to liquids—all without adding bulk to an already large device.



Snugg iPad Pro Case
($29.99)

For those interested in accessories that look good in both professional and casual settings, Snugg's iPad Pro case is a beautifully crafted option. It's constructed of soft, genuine leather and features seven color options and a built-in smart cover that doubles as a stand. It also has an elastic hand strap, allowing you to easily hold the device without fear of it slipping or of inadvertently dropping it.



Logi CREATE
(Price TBA)

This svelte and attractive case for the iPad Pro contains a keyboard that you'll never need to charge. The keyboard draws its power directly from the Pro via its Smart Connector system. If you'd like a case that provides comprehensive protection while also offering laptop-like functionality, the CREATE case from Logi is a superb option.



Zagg Slim Book
($139.99)

Convert your iPad Pro into a laptop with Zagg's Slim Book. True to its name, the Slim Book is impressively thin, featuring a detachable keyboard that lasts a remarkable two years between charges. The keyboard also has backlit keys, which you can set to any of three custom lighting colors and brightness levels. Additionally, the Slim Book lets you adjust your Pro to any number of custom viewing angles, just like a laptop would.



Comsoon iPad Pro Case
($29.99)

Comsoon's case for the iPad Pro is a bargain, and it features a 360-degree rotating stand that allows you to easily switch your tablet between portrait and landscape orientation. The synthetic leather resists stains, and the elastic strap helps you keep a secure grip on your Pro.



Siva Om is senior gear editor at iPhone Life. His interests include the arts, web design, tattooing (sacredfiretattoos.com), and journalism. Between writing for *iPhone Life*, creating websites (idoctechsupport.com), gardening, illustrating, and enjoying the wonders of nature with family, Siva manages to keep himself quite busy. You can reach him at sivaom@iphonelife.com.

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THE TOUGHEST CABLES ON EARTH

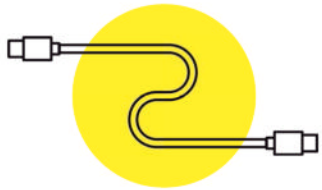
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SO LONG, CHEAP CABLE

5 TOUGH ALTERNATIVES TO APPLE'S LIGHTNING CABLE

BY KENNETH BOSHELL

Does your official Apple Lightning to USB cable keep breaking, and you want to go aftermarket? Did you go with an aftermarket cable and receive the dreaded error message saying your new cable isn't compatible with your device because it's not MFi-certified (Made For iPhone)? Don't fret, all too many of us have been there, which is why I decided to test the top cables on the market to find out which ones are worth your time and money.

HOW I TESTED

All of the cables featured here passed a rigorous series of tests for wear and tear, syncing, and charging capabilities.

Wear and Tear

First, I bent each cord back and forth a hundred times and carried the cables around for a week to simulate heavy usage.

Charging

I tested each cable's charging reliability by plugging it in to an iPhone overnight for a week and tested speed by plugging it in for an hour at 20 percent battery level. All cords featured here had similar results.

Syncing

I tested syncing speed by transferring a 50 MB media file. The shorter travel cables were slightly faster, but all cables here charged at about the same rate.

FINDING THE PERFECT CABLE

If none of the featured cables suit your style, here are a few tips for picking out a quality cable designed to last:

1) The cable must be MFi-certified. If it is not, walk away. You will be wasting your money and your time.

2) We've found that braiding is a consistent indicator of quality and reliability. It helps keep cords from tangling too, but it's not necessary for a great cable.

3) If you need absolute durability, go for a shorter length.

4) Every good cable has a plastic (or better material) support that connects over the wire and attaches to the head of the cable. This prevents breaking when bent near the ends.

5) Make sure that whatever cable you buy has a safety rating and is guaranteed or has a warranty. If it's not, then the manufacturer doesn't stand by its products, and that's the clearest warning you'll ever have.

feelplus/shutterstock

THE WINNERS



Fuse Chicken Titan
($35)
Don't let its name fool you: this cable is not playing around. This industrial steel-wrapped cable has survived cat attacks, dog gnawing, violent bends, spills, and one three-year-old using it as an Indiana Jones whip. I even used it to hang from a tree branch without damaging it (but don't try that at home!). Fuse Chicken syncs your content fast and is hands-down my favorite charging solution to date.



Anker Nylon Braided Cable
($29.99)
My second recommendation is Anker's Nylon Braided cable. Though not nearly as tough as the Titan, this cable passed my tests with superior results, and it comes in three colors: silver, gold, and grey. You can also opt for the standard Anker (starting at $19.99), but I'm a fan of the nylon option; it provides better durability and resists tangling.

THE TRAVELLERS



Fuse Chicken Titan Loop
($30)
The little brother of the longer Titan cable has all the same strength of the full-size Titan, but in a convenient travel-size key chain. The Loop collapses down to five inches long, and extends to nine inches for convenient charging.



NomadKey
($24.95)
Super strong, durable, fast, and small—that's the only way to describe the NomadKey. This 3-inch Lightning cable attaches to your key ring and is made of some of the toughest yet most flexible rubber I've ever seen.



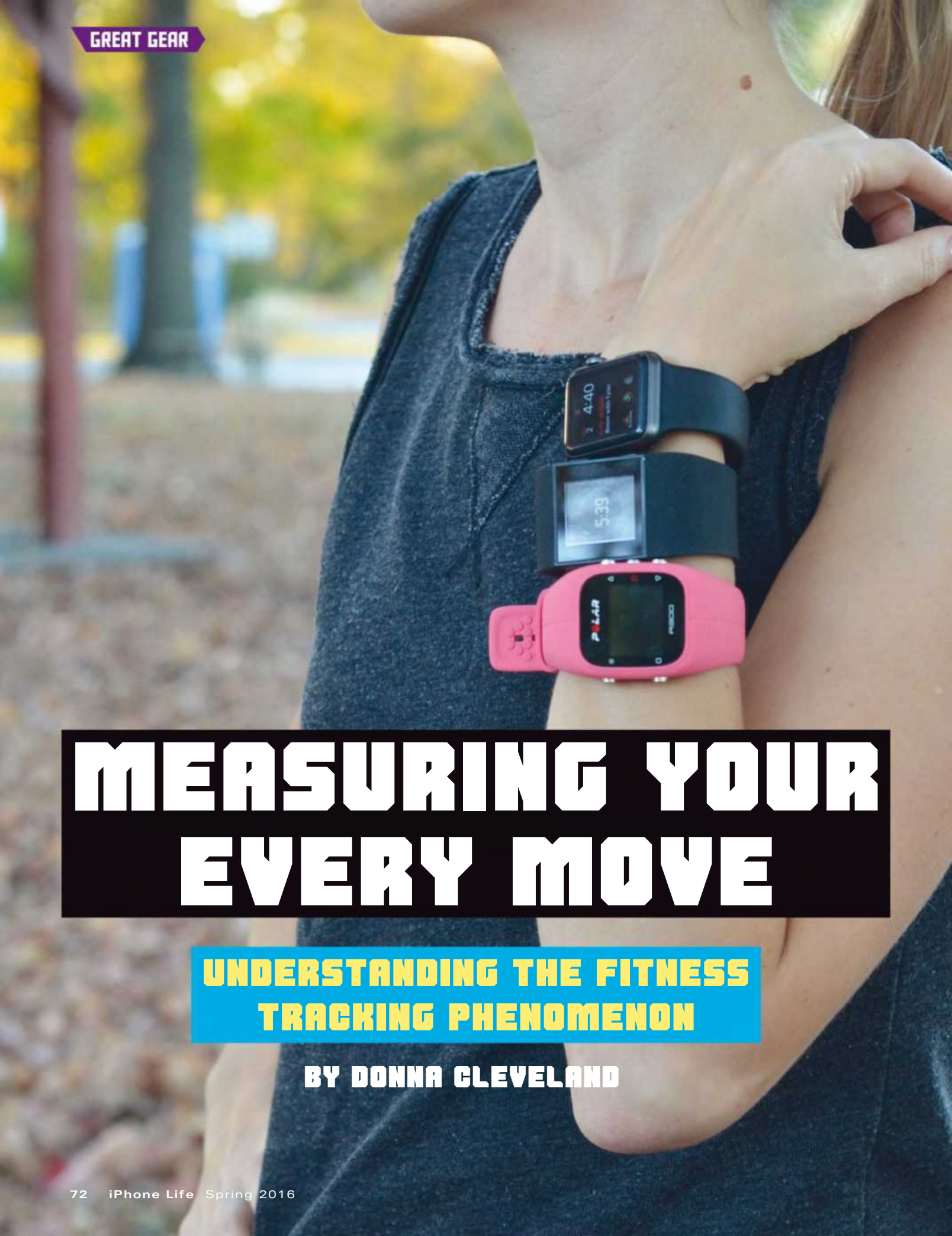
Kero Nomad Cable
($19.99)
This cable gets the job done but is made of lower quality materials overall. It comes with a cap, but I found this to be more of a hindrance than a benefit as it slipped off when I walked. Still, it's a solid budget alternative to my top two picks.

FINAL VERDICT

I've tested a variety of Lightning cables over the years, and these are the ones I'd recommend above all others. Although cheap cables always sound like a good idea at first, you'll find that spending a little extra money on a higher-quality product makes a huge difference in the longevity of your cable.



Kenneth Boshell is a freelance writer who lives in Florida. His finely honed skills include finding great taco eateries, petting random cats, and hunting for the most delicious chocolate bar in the world. He has a ridiculously large pile of books to read, which he'd get to if he could just put down the *Black Company* and *Harry Potter* for a moment.



MEASURING YOUR EVERY MOVE

UNDERSTANDING THE FITNESS TRACKING PHENOMENON

BY DONNA CLEVELAND

It took Apple releasing the Apple Watch to pique my interest in fitness tracking. I had friends who counted steps religiously, but it wasn't until I saw the gleaming surface of the Apple Watch during Tim Cook's reveal of the wearable last April that I felt compelled to follow suit.

I soon learned that the process of fitness tracking was a sport in its own right. I had never tracked calories before, I didn't know what my resting or peak heart rate was, and I was blissfully unaware of the fact that I was living a sedentary lifestyle despite working out semi-regularly. As it turned out, all of those long hours I spent working at the computer couldn't be washed away by an afternoon yoga class.

While using my new Apple Watch was like getting a crash course in the basic metrics of fitness, I still felt like I was poking around in the dark. I was gathering stats, but they lacked context. I could see my heart rate, but my watch wasn't able to tell me things like how my heart rate was responding to the same workload over time or how many steps I should be taking in order to achieve a certain weight-loss goal. I became curious about whether other trackers had the same limitations and decided to see how the Apple Watch stacked up to the competition.

"ONE OF THE THINGS THAT THESE WEARABLES WILL DO IS TELL THE TRUTH. HUMANS HAVE A REALLY BAD RECALL WHEN IT COMES TO EXERCISE AND FOOD TRACKING."

I set out on a mission to test out and compare three top fitness trackers, including the Apple Watch, Fitbit Surge, and Polar A300. In the month following, I shamelessly sported a string of gadgets strapped to my wrist. Despite constant questioning from strangers and hazing from coworkers, I stayed true to my mission.

But as I learned more about fitness tracking, bigger questions began to emerge. While there was clearly a booming market for fitness bands—with revenue from trackers projected to exceed $5 billion in the next three years—there were also signs of trouble. A 2015 study from Argus Insights shows that 60 percent of Fitbits (the best-selling fitness band) end up in a drawer within a year.

I wanted to know what exactly was happening here. Did we see a future in which fitness trackers could help us live healthier lives, or did they lack staying power? In pursuit of the answers, I spoke with a CrossFit trainer, a professor of kinesiology, and a biometrics researcher to gain their insights on the matter. Here's what I found out.

WHY TRACK FITNESS IN THE FIRST PLACE?

My enthusiasm began to wane after a week of wearing all three trackers, and I started to wonder: If I knew I was working out regularly, did I really need a fitness tracker to tell me that? Chris Eschbach, director of the biometrics lab for Valencell, which develops sensor technology similar to that present in the Apple Watch and Fitbit, pointed out the flaw in my logic.

"THE SATISFACTION OF MEETING GOALS IS A VERY BIG THING FOR PEOPLE—IT HELPS THEM TO CONTINUE."

"One of the things that these wearables will do is tell the truth," said Eschbach. "Humans have a really bad recall when it comes to exercise and food tracking."

I had been called out. And after talking to CrossFit coach and Boom Fitness owner Tihomir Liptak, I soon learned that trackers not only keep your overly optimistic memory in check, but also give you metrics that allow you to set concrete goals.

"If you say, 'I want to lose weight,' nothing is going to happen," he said. "In CrossFit, you want to be able to come up with concrete measurements of where you are and how you're improving. The satisfaction of meeting goals is a very big thing for people—it helps them to continue."

Liptak says there are three main ingredients that reap results at the gym: goal setting, measuring progress, and community support. He says fitness trackers aim to simulate what he provides for his gym members, with an added bonus—the accessories stay with you even when you've left the gym.

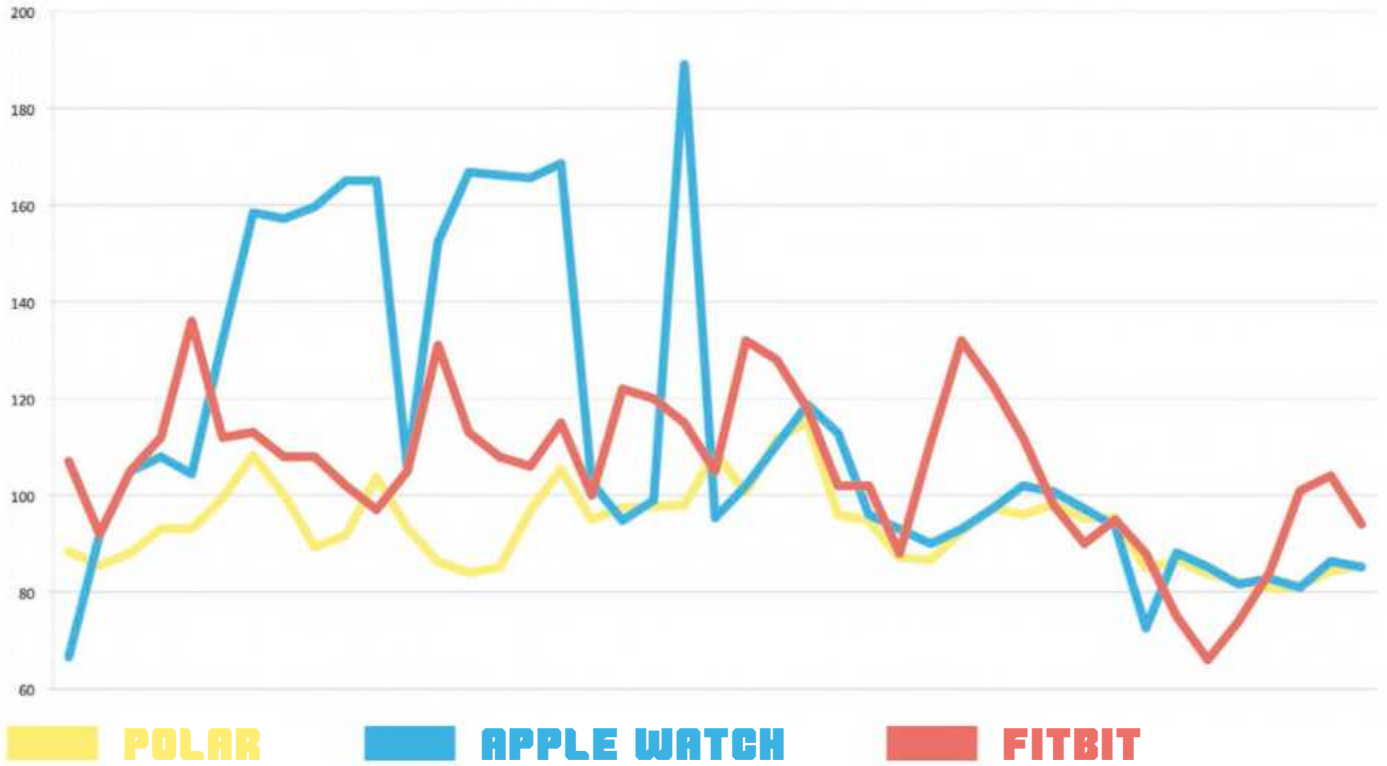
Eschbach may have summed it up best when he said: "It's self help. People want to learn about themselves, and tracking provides strength in what they're trying to accomplish."

WHY TRACKING STEPS IS IMPORTANT

You've probably seen the headlines in the past year telling you that "sitting is the new smoking." That's because a 2015 report by the *Annals of Internal Medicine* shows that if you sit for extended periods of time, you're more likely to develop diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease.

Long before these studies emerged, professor of kinesiology at University of Massachusetts Amherst Catrine Tudor-Locke began studying pedometry as a way to encourage people to get up and move throughout the day. Tudor-Locke had the sense that people shouldn't just count exercise sessions

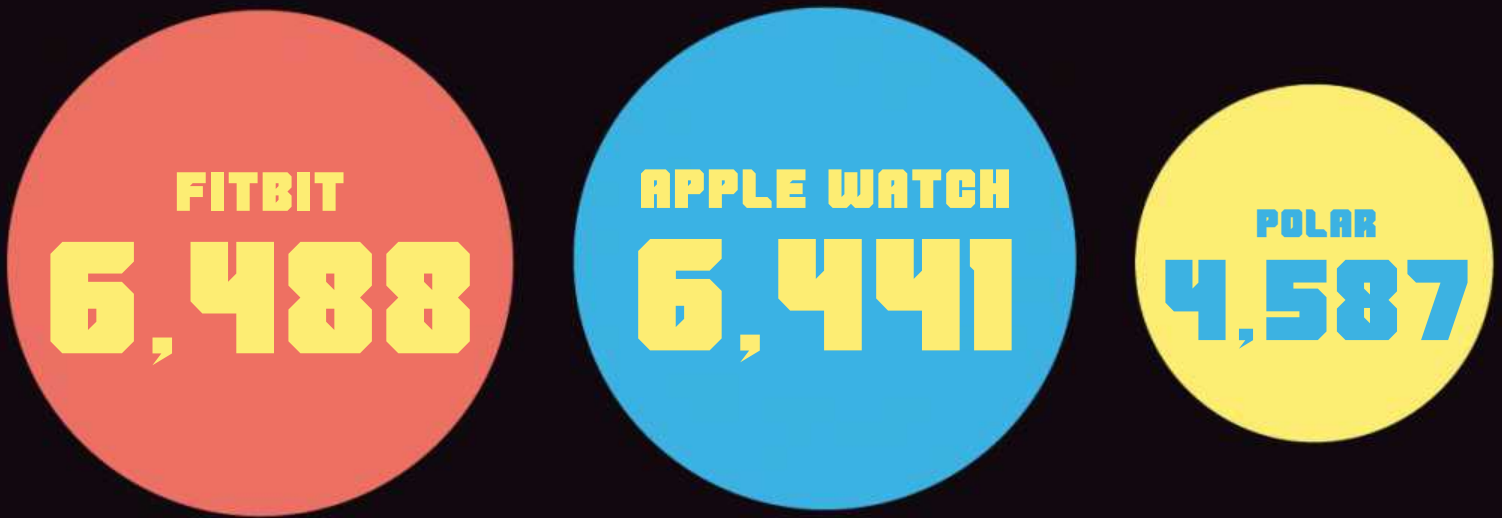
HOW ACCURATE ARE HEART-RATE READINGS?



This chart illustrates heart-rate readings from all three trackers during a half-hour walk. In this comparison, I used the Polar A300 (yellow) as the benchmark (chest strap monitors are widely regarded as the most accurate). While the Apple Watch gave a few false readings during the first half of the walk, it was generally closer to the A300 in readings than the Fitbit Surge.

STEP COUNT COMPARED (TOTAL IN ONE DAY)

After a day of wearing the trackers for the same length of time, the Fitbit—an established name in step counting—came out nearly identical to the Apple Watch. The Polar A300, on the other hand, was nearly 2,000 steps behind.



HEAD-TO-HEAD COMPARISON







	Apple Watch (Starting at $349)	Fitbit Surge Super Watch ($249.95)	Polar A300 ($139.95)
Step Counting	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sleep Tracking	No	Yes	Yes
Clock	Yes	Yes	Yes
Heart-Rate Monitor	Yes	Yes	Yes (pairs with chest-strap monitor)
GPS Tracking	Only when tethered to iPhone	Yes	Yes
Stand Reminders	Yes	No	Yes
Water Resistant	Yes	Yes	Yes (waterproof)
Food Logging	No	Yes	Yes
Battery Life	Up to 18 hours	Up to 7 days	Up to 4 weeks
App Features	Works with Apple's Health, Activity, and Workout apps, as well as third-party fitness apps	Syncs with popular fitness apps; Fitbit app (free) tracks runs and presents daily stats	Polar Flow app (free) displays your achievements, weekly progress, and sends alerts
Heart-Rate Zones	No	Yes	Yes
Special Features	Intuitive fitness tracker in full-featured smartwatch	Call and text notifications; multi-sport tracking; continuous heart-rate tracking	Multi-sport tracking; accurate heart-rate readings
Where it Falls Short	Short battery life; lack of food and sleep tracking; lagging heart-rate readings.	Bulky; clunky interface	Bulky; requires web service; poor-quality step tracker and iPhone app

when looking at their health, but instead take a look at the whole picture. "I try to quantify it all, not just the exercise," she said. "I'm trying to get people to move."

Studies have shown that those who use pedometers walk at least 2,000 steps more per day than non-users, making it an effective way to motivate people to exercise. "I believe in step counting," said Tudor-Locke. "It's one of the most effective interventions for physical activity."

WHY HEART RATE MATTERS

Most fitness trackers and smartwatches on the market track your steps as well as your heart rate in order to calculate how many calories you're burning during workouts ranging from running to cycling to CrossFit.

Measuring heart rate not only gives you a more complete picture of your activity, but it is also a helpful self-assessment tool, because it tells you how fit your heart is, and shows you how hard you're pushing yourself.

"Heart rate is an indicator of intensity," said Eschbach. "As you become more fit, your heart becomes more efficient."

The US Department of Health assigns you a maximum heart-rate zone of 150–200 beats per minute depending on your age. Based on these guidelines, the Fitbit Surge and Polar A300 tell you how hard you're working during an exercise session, helping you to decide whether to push harder or to scale back. The Apple Watch doesn't have this feature, however, leaving it up to users to learn their own target heart rate.

THE FALLOUT

I had begun to see a compelling argument for fitness tracking, yet I wanted to learn why 60 percent of Fitbit users were abandoning their devices. According to Tudor-Locke, that statistic might be misleading. "I never intended for people to wear these [pedometers] for the rest of their lives," she said. "They are a useful tool to teach you what it means to be active." Tudor-Locke said she often recommends people wear their trackers seasonally to prevent sliding back into old habits.

Eschbach, on the other hand, had a less optimistic view. "There's a long way to go in terms of what needs to happen with the user experience," he said. "People need interesting insights and community support. The problem is, a lot of product makers are having enough trouble getting accurate results."

FOR THOSE DEDICATED TO THE CAUSE, TODAY'S FITNESS TRACKERS HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO HELP YOU SET GOALS AND MAKE PROGRESS TOWARD THEM.

Whatever the reason, I had slipped into a state of complacency when it came to monitoring my activity. I was more active than I had been before the experiment, yet I had stopped using my Fitbit and Polar trackers. While they each had some great features, I found that they were too bulky and required too much effort to use. I still wore the Apple Watch, however, but only because of its many other apps.

I was, however, still going to the gym. Liptak said that while trackers simulate the gym experience, the gym has certain advantages. "Part of the reason CrossFit is successful is because it tries really hard to prevent fallout," he said. "We provide community support and take care of everything short of people showing up."

SO SHOULD YOU BUY A FITNESS TRACKER?

Eschbach has an inspiring vision for the future of fitness tracking. He said that eventually we can quantify things like stress using metrics he's begun studying, including heart-rate variability and breathing. Our trackers would take that information and give insights such as lowered stress levels after a yoga class or even a 2 percent improvement in cardiovascular fitness within a week.

"The dream to me is taking multiple metrics and bringing them together into a picture of you," he said. "If we continue to provide an evolving education and story, people will continue to use them and get value."

While I didn't come out of this experiment as a fitness tracker convert, I have learned what it means to be active. I learned that our brains have a way of either exaggerating or minimizing events depending upon our moods. For those dedicated to the cause, today's fitness trackers have what it takes to help you set goals and make progress toward them. But for those of you, like me, who want a fitness tracker that does the work of goal setting and data analysis for you, I'd suggest waiting a couple of years until Eschbach's dream device comes to fruition.

THE VERDICT

Polar A300 is the best choice if you're looking for the most accurate heart-rate readings and you don't mind less reliable step-counting capabilities. It is not the best choice if convenience and style are important to you.

Fitbit Surge is a good option for distance-based exercise such as running, walking, and climbing. It's easy to track your route and pace with GPS, and the step counts are accurate. Heart-rate tracking is not its strength, however, and it is too bulky to wear all day and night, even though that's how it's designed to be worn.

Apple Watch is the best all-around tracker. It accurately measures heart rate (minus a few false readings) and steps, and its large set of non-fitness related features help keep you wearing it.



Donna Schill Cleveland is the Editor in Chief of *iPhone Life* magazine. After a short stint as a newspaper reporter, she became web editor at *iPhone Life*, where she continues to pair her penchant for storytelling with her love of Apple products. Donna holds a master's degree from the University of Iowa School of Journalism & Mass Communication.

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Meet Your MATCH

Top 7 Apps for the Online Dating Novice

by Anna Sica

In a digital world in which everyone's eyes are constantly glued to their phones, it only makes sense that we use our devices for life's most awkward yet unavoidable activity—dating. We use apps for everything from job hunting to ordering takeout, after all, so why not also use them to find love? Lucky for you, today there's an app for just about every romantic pursuit out there. Dating apps can facilitate anything from a casual coffee date to a one-night stand—whatever floats your boat. If you're like me, and you're just dipping your toes into online dating, you might find these seven apps helpful. If nothing else, you'll have some good stories to tell your friends. Here are the basics:

OkCupid Dating
(Free)
If you're looking for an app that gives you lots of background info about potential partners, OkCupid is a good one to start with. When you initially sign up, you answer a few basic questions, such as "Is smoking disgusting?" or "Are you looking for someone to have kids with?" To make setup faster, you can choose to link your account to Facebook. You then see a grid of potential matches along with a percentage indicating compatibility. Profiles contain a lot of information—more than any other app on this list—and questionnaires can get very involved. The match percentage can be helpful in determining whether you could have some major lifestyle and personality differences right off the bat, whereas other apps often give you almost no information.

Tinder
(Free)
Tinder is a favorite among dating apps for one main reason: it's simple. The app links to your Facebook account and shows you people within a distance and age range of your choosing. If you think someone is cute, you swipe right; if not, swipe left. If both parties swipe right, it's a match! You can now chat and arrange to meet up. If you're looking for a relationship, beware; this app is a notorious hookup app with no vetting process. In fact, according to a 2015 survey by research firm GlobalWebIndex, only 54 percent of Tinder users are even single.

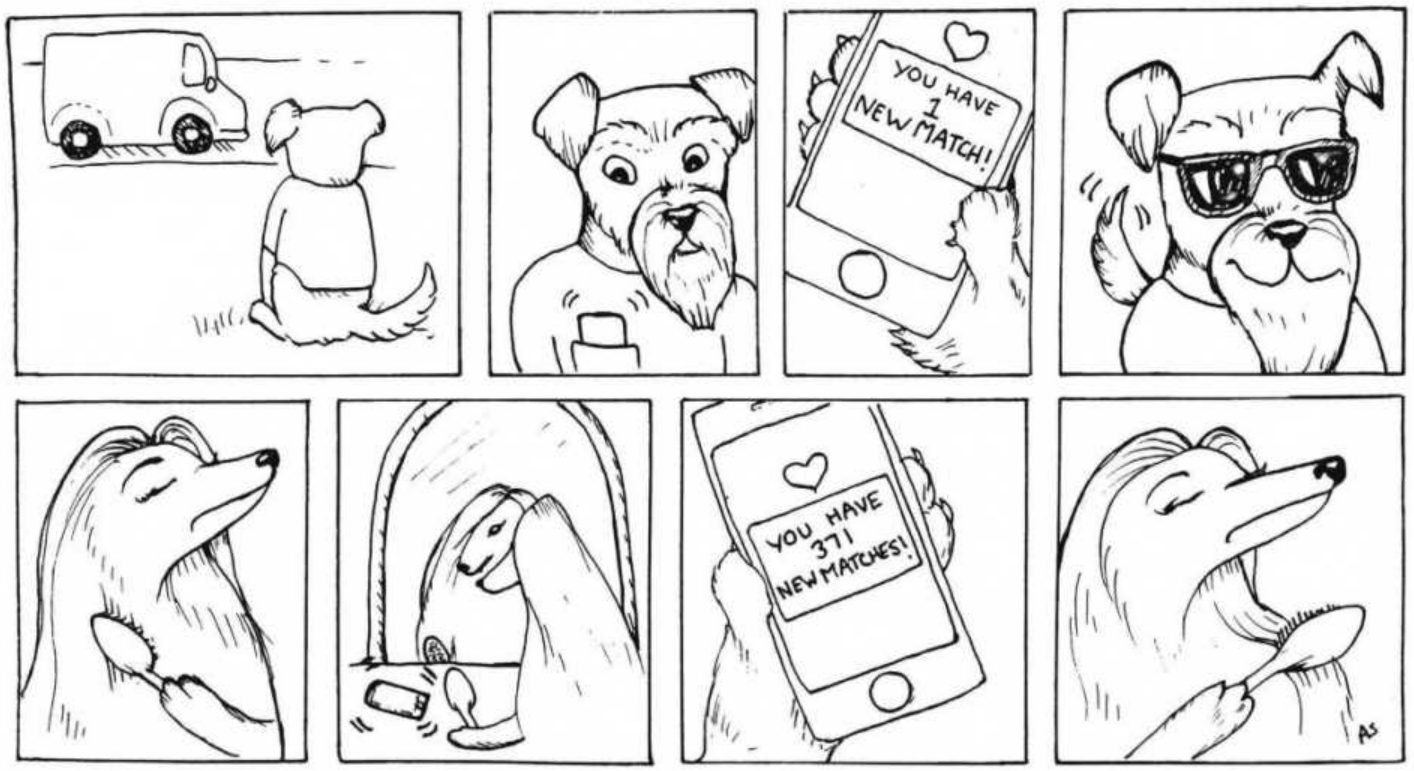


Illustration by Anna Sica

Bumble
(Free)
Created by the disillusioned co-founder of Tinder, Bumble uses the same basic concept as its forebear but with one major difference: only women can initiate a chat. If you're a girl, this could help eliminate some strange messages (check out @tindernightmares on Instagram). There's an extra motivation here too. If you don't initiate a chat within 24 hours of a match, your opportunity disappears forever.

Hinge
(Free)
If the idea of meeting a complete stranger is intimidating, Hinge gives you an easy out, only matching you with friends of your Facebook friends. Hinge shows you fewer potential matches per day than Tinder, but with the major perk that your mutual friend can vouch for your match (or not), and you know that you'll have at least one common interest to talk about. Hinge links to your Facebook account and gives you the option to share some basic details about yourself, like your employer, school, height, and hometown.

happn
(Free)
The most location-based app of the bunch, happn only shows you users who are within 250 meters of you in real time. If you both like each other, you can initiate a chat. The happn app also links to Facebook, which allows it to provide some basic info in your profile. Knowing exactly how close someone is to you can be a pro or a con depending on how you look at it, but your specific location is kept private.

SCORE
(Free)
Only two apps on this list involve compatibility testing: SCORE and OkCupid. Score matches you up with people who have some common interests based on info from your Facebook profile. Next, this game-like dating app sends you both matching questionnaires; if your answers indicate compatibility, you can chat and see more of each other's profile, including profile pictures. SCORE forces you to invest some time and effort before finding a match. Ironically, a person looking only to score probably isn't using this app.

Tindog
(Free)
You guessed it—this app is the Tinder for dogs. Ok, so it's not a dating app for people, but that doesn't necessarily mean you can't find singles who are ready to mingle at the dog park. If you're looking for a pal for your pooch, this app is your new best friend. If you both swipe right, it's a match!



Anna Sica is an editor for Smilebooth and a freelance tattoo artist. She graduated with a BFA from Maharishi University of Management where she studied analog photography. She loves all things creative, from writing to building terrariums. She recently spent a few years in New York City, but grew up in Fairfield, IA, where she currently resides. You can reach her at anna.sica@gmail.com

iVIEW

Portable Computing 2016: iPad, Chromebook, & Microsoft Surface Pro

By Hal Goldstein

Our company started in 1985 with the publication of a newsletter about the first PC-compatible laptop. The rugged, $2,995 Hewlett-Packard 110 laptop computer came with solid storage, a battery that lasted several days, a modem, a suite of apps, spreadsheet, word processor, database manager, and the ability to install third-party apps. Using that laptop at the airport brought strange stares.

Fast-forward 30 years, and I now own an iPhone 6 Plus, an iPad Mini 4, an ASUS Chromebook Flip, and a Microsoft Surface Pro 4—all for less than what I paid for the HP Portable. Although my collection admittedly seems like overkill, I enjoy the different flavors of today's portable computing.

Most Used: iPad Mini 4

Without a pressing need, I couldn't justify the expense of the iPad Pro. However, wanting the latest, I replaced my currently unused, original iPad mini with a mini 4 for its faster processor, better display, and split-screen multitasking.

Although disappointed by the lack of 3D Touch and the Mini's poor speaker quality (the iPhone 6 Plus speakers are actually much louder), I love its lightness and portability. I use it all the time, particularly for email, surfing the web, reading e-books, and playing games. I'm surprised by how little I miss the larger iPad Air display and how much I prefer the mini's screen size to that of the iPhone 6 Plus.

Best Value: ASUS Chromebook Flip

For $239, I purchased the ASUS Chromebook Flip at Amazon. Its 10.1-inch display, built-in keyboard and touchpad, touchscreen display, and 360-degree hinge allow the Flip to easily act as a laptop or tablet. Slim and lightweight, the Flip features excellent performance, impressive battery life, Bluetooth connectivity, two USB 2.0 ports, a headset jack, a micro-HDMI port, and a microSD card slot.

Rather than iOS or Windows, the Chromebook uses the Google Chrome web browser as its operating system. With the ability to add extensions and work offline, Chromebooks are sufficient for many users' needs. I turn to mine often for simple tasks requiring a keyboard, such as sending emails or getting on social media.

Full-Featured: Surface Pro 4

After reading glowing CNET and PC Mag reviews, and coming from the legacy of MS-DOS and Windows, I purchased the new Surface Pro 4. I loved its thin, lightweight design, as well as its 12.3-inch high-resolution display and detachable keyboard and cover, which allows the Surface to successfully function as a Windows tablet or laptop. With a multi-function pen and built-in stand, the Surface Pro takes on shapes that work for me at any given time. The Surface starts at $899 and has thus far exceeded my expectations.

Which One Is My Favorite?

I use the uber-portable iPad Mini the most—mostly for entertainment and communication. Meanwhile, I use the Chromebook for simple tasks requiring a keyboard and the Surface Pro when I need a true desktop PC substitute. However, if I could only have one device to accompany my iPhone, it would be the full-featured Surface Pro.



Hal, along with his wife Rita, founded *iPhone Life*'s original publishing company, Thaddeus Computing, in 1985. You can reach him at hal@thaddeus.com. Check out Hal's new book at meditatingentrepreneur.com.

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